Collaborative Ministry – A Case Study in Innovation, Collegiality and Theological Reflection

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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Abstract

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In 1996 a Lay Parish Leader was appointed to the Catholic parish of St Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, Melbourne. The Commissioning liturgy was performed by the Archbishop, the first such official appointment in Australia. The expansion of lay ministries, the growing numbers of lay ecclesial ministers and the reality of the shortage of priests contributed to the need to evaluate new models of leadership. The *Tomorrow's Church* process projected that by 2010 there would be 80 parishes without a resident priest. Aspendale accepted a Lay Pastoral Leader for a three year Pilot Project. Because of the complex nature of the relationship between Priest and Parish, it was important for the developing role of the Lay Pastoral Leader to be evaluated.

The study was intended to become part of on-going research but almost 18 months into the project the new Archbishop reversed previous policy and deleted the model. The data became 'redundant' so the study focused on broader issues. The focus of the revised study was not so much concerned with evaluating the attitudes and beliefs before and after the pastoral leader's ministry, as with gauging responses to new models of ministry and analysing multi-level influences. Two areas of inquiry, each with its own methodological base, complemented one another as basic tools of theological reflection:

- The initial findings from Aspendale stimulated library-based research and theological engagement with multi-level responses (parish, diocesan, national, international) to collaborative ministry and lay ecclesial ministry (Groome 1980; 1989; Whitehead and Whitehead 1991; Browning 1991).
- The research methodology was located within the discipline of Practical Theology. Models of theological reflection (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995a; Kinast 1996; 2000) were developed alongside the interpretive methods of qualitative research (van Manen 1990; Glaser 1992; Grbich 1999). A Grounded Theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Glaser 1998) was blended with a Case Study rationale (Stake 1995; Yin 2003a).

The thesis explores the historical and contemporary context of the development of collaborative ministry within Australia and the wider Catholic Church. Vatican documents on priesthood and lay ministry are studied in conjunction with documents from Bishops' Conferences in England and Wales, North America and Australia. Sofield and Juliano's theory of transition to a final stage of acceptance of collaborative ministry (1987), provided a particular focus on the adequacy of communication, dialogue, theological reflection and change management by those in leadership positions.

The research indicates that transition to the final stage of acceptance of new models of collaborative ministry is closely linked to a number of factors.

- Key participants in the process of transition require a facility with flexible models of theological reflection and a commitment to complementarity and mutuality in the joint early formation and ministry practice of priests and lay leaders.
- Strategic and intentional internships for lay pastoral leaders and specific support systems for those who are married are essential.
- A growth-oriented transition requires commitment to training and education in the pastoral application of principles of grief and loss as the Church experiences significant changes in ministry paradigms.
- Successful transition is based on a culture of effective, sustained dialogue.

There are complex theological and pastoral implications for the use of the Aspendale model. The Lay Pastoral Leader described it as a "crook" model (Australian colloquialism for inadequate or somewhat dysfunctional), but mature leadership from visiting priests and local lay leaders led to an inspiring mutuality that gave strength and direction to the parish and created a very effective transitional ministry. The model surfaced many issues that resonated with the wider Church and deserves, with appropriate modification, a place in the suite of Archdiocesan responses to the needs of parishes.

Acknowledgments

It has been a rare privilege to be invited to explore at first-hand, over an extended period of time, a Christian tradition very different to my own. I sometimes feel as if I value the ritual, theology and story of the Roman Catholic Church far more than my occasionally irreverent Catholic friends, but I suspect that is the reality of community life.

I am an ordained minister of Churches of Christ (Disciples) teaching in a theological college that is part of an ecumenical partnership, the Melbourne College of Divinity. Most of my students are lay men and women caught up in the adventure of setting up a conversation between their call, their theological studies and their ministry in a variety of settings. Many of my other students are caught up in the same adventure – they are ordination candidates.

As I am taught by my students so I have been taught by Terry Curtin, whose appointment to Aspendale as Lay Pastoral Leader triggered this study, and the people of the parish. Their deep love for the Church was measured by their fidelity and missional integrity in the face of the disappointment of lost dreams when the model was deleted.

I have been educated by parish planners, inspired by priests working under overwhelming expectations, and challenged by the vision and energy of lay women and men in parish communities.

I am grateful for the constant guidance of my adviser at the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Dr Marie Joyce, particularly during the difficult days when the whole project changed direction. Her faith and vision inspire many to undertake new ventures. I am grateful for the support of Associate Adviser Dr Brian Kelty from the ACU School of Practical Theology, and the wise insights received from Dr John Collins during a

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My colleagues on the Faculty and the Board of Management of the Churches of Christ Theological College, Melbourne have blessed me with the gift of encouragement and the practical support of study leave.

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My wife and friend Chris and my now grown-up children, Andrew, Nicholas and Claire all remind me who I am and where my other priorities lie. I am looking forward to catching up with them all, especially Chris.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Avril Regan; co-teacher in pastoral care and counselling; psychologist; spiritual director; Catholic laywoman; wife of John and mother of Simon and Ruth. (13.1.1950 – 9.11.2005). We co-taught a final class two weeks before Avril died. Her journal named the place of hope where she lived during her illness. May it be true for all who seek the vocation that God has for them and may it be true of the Church.

"I sit in this place of peace, of joy, of hope, of resurrection. I am different now, but cannot always name the depth of this new life in me." June 10 2005.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

The Aspendale Pilot Project: A Case Study Unfolds

1.1 Introduction: The Origins of the Project

On 11 August 1992 Archbishop Little, as recorded in the *Tomorrow's Church Report*, made an announcement to the Senate of Priests of the Archdiocese of Melbourne:

> Given the declining number of priests, the opportunities offered to people for worship and priestly service are diminishing. How can we ensure that at least the current level of opportunity is maintained (1994, 4)?

A Working Group was established to identify various models of leadership, evaluate their effectiveness, develop criteria for the application of each model, institute a formation process for appropriate candidates and identify suitable parishes for experimentation (35). One key task was to "identify modes of evaluation" (4), and following the appointment of a non-ordained pastoral leader to the parish of St Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, this research project was commissioned in 1995 by the Pastoral Leadership Board of the Archdiocese. Among the many options open to the Archdiocese, the "non-ordained pastoral leader" was described in the Tomorrow's Church Report. He or she would be:

- appointed by the Archbishop;
- resident in the Parish;
- called to work with a supervising priest and serve in partnership with a sacramental minister;
- and be the provider of pastoral, spiritual and organisational leadership to the Parish (1994, 24).

The same report noted the recommendation that "the Archbishop adopt the Pastoral Leader Model as one of the two preferred ways of providing for parishes without resident priests" (25), given that by the year 2010 it was predicted that "over 70 parishes, or more than a quarter of the Archdiocese, [would] be without a resident priest" (15). The inauguration of this new role was marked liturgically when Archbishop Little commissioned the pastoral leader at Aspendale on 11 February 1996. The following

excerpt comes from the order of service on that day and clearly identifies the significance of the ministry role and the appointment.

Archbishop: This new office in the Archdiocese entrusts the pastoral, spiritual, and organisational leadership of the parish to the Pastoral Leader under the supervision of a Priest-Pastoral Supervisor. Let us now pray for God's blessing in the fulfilment of his office. (Silent prayer).
Loving Father, in your love for us you sent your Son to be our shepherd and leader, our brother and Lord. You continue to show your love for us by means of a variety of ministries of leadership and pastoral care. Bless [this your servant] as he takes up his responsibility as Pastoral Leader. Let your Spirit guide him as he walks with the people of this community. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. All: Amen

> *I, Thomas Francis Little, Archbishop of Melbourne,*
> *commission you as Pastoral Leader of this parish community of*
> *St. Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, for a period of three years.*
> *May the Holy Spirit come upon you pouring out*
> *the gift of wisdom, when you are uncertain;*
> *the gift of courage when you are afraid;*
> *the gift of peace, when you are disturbed;*
> *the gift of joy, when you are blessed;*
> *the gift of compassion, when you meet suffering;*
> *and over all these gifts, to keep them together and complete them,*
> *may you put on love.*

1.1.1 The appointment, role and context of the Lay Pastoral Leader

In July 1995 the parish of St Louis de Montfort (established 1963)[1] offered to implement the pilot project and the position was advertised throughout Australia in September of the same year. A Transition Team was established with responsibility for the ongoing education and preparation of the parish, the development of a detailed role description,[2] and the management of the interview and employment process. The goal of a December 1995 appointment was not met due to procedural difficulties.

The Pastoral leader was selected from four short-listed candidates by a committee made up of priests representing Diocesan committees and local parishioners. Following an interview with the Bishop who chaired the Pastoral Leadership Board, a

[1] The 800 families of the parish were mainly white Anglo-Saxon. They supported a primary school of approximately 350 children.
[2] Local needs were integrated with the detailed role description in the Archbishop's Decree. Appendix 1.

three year appointment was ratified by the Archbishop.[3] Canons 517.2 and 145 were used as the basis for approval given that they allow a Bishop to appoint a lay person to a pastoral role if there is a shortage of priests. Canon 145 outlines the parameters of ecclesiastical care.[4] The Pastoral Leader was commissioned on the 24th January 1996. The excerpt from the liturgy cited above in Section 1.1, is illustrative of the gravitas attached to the appointment. The Archbishop, concelebrating priests, parishioners, special guests and a strong media presence all contributed to the sense that this was a significant 'first' in the life of the Australian Catholic Church.[5]

The first task was to meet with the 'priest pastoral supervisor' and then all of the key parish leaders in order to develop a realistic grasp of what was effectively the new incumbent's first parish leadership role even though pre-existent patterns of ministry formation began to emerge within the Pastoral Leader.[6] The task of overseeing and managing the life of a busy parish seemed overwhelming at times as many groups expected his support and active participation as both a hands-on pastor and mentor of leaders. Pastoral care was exercised through St. Louis Neighbours (casserole bank); Communion to the Sick; Bereavement Support Team; Friendship Group; Odd Job Brigade; Aged Activities Group; Youth Group; Phone Prayer Ministry and the Parish Magazine and Weekly Newsletter. The Pastoral Leader also supervised the Altar Care Team, The Greeters, Children's Liturgy Team, Baptism Preparation, RCIA, Retreats, The Fisher Team Outreach, and the Renewal Group. St Louis' School also became an important part of the Pastoral Leader's daily ministry, as did his supervision of

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[3] This term was later extended to four years by Archbishop Pell who deleted the model even though he recognised the practical value and positive results of this pilot ministry

[4] Detailed discussion of these canons appears throughout this thesis but note in particular Section 4.1.4 and the discussion of the work of Sharon Euart (1995). The guidelines for the role allowed for the appointment of a sacramental minister for weekend Masses and other pastoral responsibilities that required an ordained person. This appointment did not eventuate and so the Pastoral Leader was constantly developing and expanding rosters of priests. The difficulty in finding priests was to become a common theme in the data analysis.

[5] The Pastoral Leader informed me that specific instructions had been given to the liturgy team that the commissioning must in no way seem like an ordination.

[6] The first few months presented many anxious moments but 10 years in the seminary (age 14–23), degrees in theology and counselling, active parish participation and many years in administration all worked together to complement the growing job specification.

administration through an active Parish Council that initiated parish Planning/Discernment Days.[7]

As noted above, the maintenance of the roster of priests presented constant difficulties and ultimately more than 50 priests assisted the Pastoral Leader over the four year term. Many presided only a few times and some became regulars but only for the brief occasion of the Mass. Because no Sacramental Minister had been appointed the Pastoral Leader was responsible for the coordination of the sacramental life of the parish and this combined with his symbolic presence as parish leader at weekend Masses to create a powerful, consistent and human presence. He also conducted funerals, led Communion Services and Liturgies of the Word, gave a number of homilies and trained liturgical ministers. The identification of these tasks with the normal role of the parish priest was to create a number of anomalous themes in the data.[8]

From 1963 the School Hall had served as the Chapel. In addition to being present at weekend Masses (and the odd weekday Mass) the Pastoral Leader was responsible for the oversight of all the ministry outlined above and for future planning that involved the development of a permanent Chapel, a parish administration centre and additional rooms. In partnership with appropriate committees he was the active manager and collaborative guide of the project This busy schedule placed great pressure upon a person who was both a family man and a new recruit to ministry in a full-time sense.[9] This emerging aspect of the model of ministry resembled that of a married Protestant minister and indeed the salary and conditions were based on this comparison, as was the need for appropriate pastoral care for married clergy.[10]

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[7] My notes from the minutes of the Interim Parish Pastoral Council (26.2.1996) describe the process of election of the new Council and itemise the Pastoral Leader's proposals for feedback and involvement from the whole parish through Annual Assemblies.

[8] The Pastoral Leader, and many in the parish, constantly struggled with the cultic model of priesthood implied by the conferring of special status on a visiting priest who had no effective pastoral leadership within the parish. The recognised community leader, accepted by the people and commissioned by the Archbishop was excluded from this role.

[9] It is neither appropriate, nor directly within the parameters of this study, to delineate the specific pressures but the Pastoral Leader's own writing (Curtin 2000 - unpublished master's thesis) describes the stress and unhappiness that accompanied spousal transition. Data analysis in Chapter 3 evaluates some of these stressors.

[10] A salary of $40,000 was based upon the average stipend of a married pastor in other Christian traditions. Parish income was supplemented by Diocesan grants and, in line with other traditions, the Australian Tax Office guidelines on fringe benefits (non-taxable for ministers of religion) were applied. At least in a fiscal

Towards the end of the appointment and following a change of Archbishop,[11] a diocesan review found that the Pastoral Leader's ministry had been highly effective and, due to regional staffing pressures, the term was extended by one year until January 2000. This pragmatic decision reflected the widespread respect for the ministry of the Pastoral Leader and while there was strong acceptance by many priests in the Deanery others were hesitant towards, or resentful of the new role. However, invitations to seminars, lunches and golf days provided a collegial conversation where all of the contemporary dilemmas of priesthood (local, diocesan and global) were paraded, bemoaned, celebrated or theologised about. Of particular note was the tension around the leadership style and theological emphases of the new Archbishop. This tension swirled around the Pastoral Leader's role and had both a relational and a theological basis. It began to develop as a significant factor in the secondary literature review in Chapter 4.[12]

Of particular note is the mentoring relationship that developed between the Pastoral Leader and the Priest Pastoral Supervisor. This wise and experienced priest was consulted frequently in the first six months and as necessary on important decisions. Monthly meetings were instituted. The former Parish Priest also offered valuable support.[13]

In line with the policy of the new Archbishop the Aspendale model was deleted from the list of options for new forms of parish leadership. The contract of the incumbent concluded in January 2000. On January 13th 2000 the Parish of St Louis de Montfort was placed in a partnership with a neighbouring parish and the role of Lay Pastoral Leader was officially eliminated.

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sense the Pastoral Leader was judged to be the same as a parish priest. He commented often that the modest salary was probably beyond the means of the average parish yet the responsibility and level of qualifications required surely recommended a salary similar to that of a Catholic School Principal.

[11] The Archbishop made it very clear that he did not accept the model but that he would support the pilot through to conclusion. He also approved the one year extension.

[12] It will be seen in the data analysis and secondary literature review (Chapters 3 and 4) that the relationship between lay leaders and priests is highly significant and has implications for joint formation and mutual vocational validation.

[13] This mentoring or supervisory role will also be explored in Chapter 4. It has particular relevance to the concept of *Viri Probati* as developed by Bishop Fritz Lobinger (1980; 1998; 2000) where, should the current criteria for ordination be changed, the ordination of local lay leaders would be dependant upon theological and pastoral oversight by regional priest-mentors or supervisors.

1.1.2 The historical context for the new model.

This chapter will provide a detailed and comprehensive review of literature that informs our understanding of the historical and theological context however some preliminary themes must be considered. Gary Burkart's study of Parish Life Coordinators (1992) revealed that Catholic parishioners in the U.S. were overwhelmingly positive towards the type of option chosen for Aspendale, particularly when it was a response to an existing need that could be well documented and accepted at all levels. This insight seems to fit naturally with the historical comment of Jay Dolan et al that the move from controlled lay apostolate to "real ministry in the 1980's led to 83% of leadership tasks in Parishes being undertaken by lay people" (1989, 271). The Revised Code of Canon Law (1983) had formally validated this trend by allowing for pastoral care to be given by those who were not ordained. These guidelines found liturgical expression at Aspendale in the Archbishop's Commissioning Prayer cited above, and pastoral expression in a detailed job specification as laid out in the Tomorrow's Church Report (1994, 23–25).

Peter Gilmour's historical survey outlined the nature, character and practical aspects of what he called *The Emerging Pastor* (1986). This movement created psychological and theological pressure on the identity of priests as numbers of talented lay men and women (Dolan et al 1990, 100) continued to grow. Sofield and Juliano's (1987) work on collaborative ministry witnessed to the growing need for this body of lay leaders to be trained and developed. This concept of collaborative ministry was further described and resourced by Doohan (1989) when he provided what he called *Grass Roots Pastors* with a handbook that dealt more deeply with issues of formation and vocation.

In Melbourne, by the time of the Tomorrow's Church Report, it became apparent that the options for parish leadership expressed a creative and complementary interaction. Tentative task-descriptions for Priest-Pastoral Supervisors, Sacramental Ministers and Pastoral Leaders were creatively woven together and affirmed by a large majority of priests and parishioners (19–28). Sharon Euart, in an edition of Center

Papers (National Pastoral Life Center, 1995) strongly affirmed the significance of this change in Canon Law as a stimulus for new models of ministry such as the "Pilot Project" outlined in the Tomorrow's Church Report (25). Her discussion will be explored in detail in this chapter. Euart summed up the contemporary situation by stating that the Lay Pastoral Leader "is to do everything that a priest-pastor does, except sacramental activities requiring ordination" (1995, 13). This is reflected in the Australian context in the outline of the responsibilities of the leader in the pilot project as recommended by the Tomorrow's Church Report and reflective of the canonical guidelines (23-25).

In her study of women lay-leaders Ruth Wallace proposed that structures have both a constraining and enabling potential (1992). The Aspendale study explored how participants interacted with both constraining and enabling features, particularly when there was a significant shift with the change of Archbishop. Even though there was popular support for the model, the Pilot Project was terminated as an experimental option but allowed to continue until the end of the contract of the pastoral leader. Participants are not just acted upon by the forces that surround them and one of the tasks of this study was to develop research questions and evaluate parishioners' responses to the new model. Leonardo Boff studied base ecclesial communities as they confronted lay leadership of the Eucharist where there was no Priest at all. He noted that a transforming role begins with the question "why can it not be that ...?" (1986, 62). He suggested that people then accept the opportunity to intervene, explore resources (in this case the available lay people) and act accordingly.

At an organisational level Burkart's (1992) national survey of the phenomenon of Parish Life Coordinators sought to understand how this response had affected the Church. His other task was to make policy suggestions from the analysis of the data. The Aspendale study sought to do the same. Burkart exposed a lack of education on the new role, ambiguity regarding the overlap with the role of Priest, and formation deficiencies in those who would work in this model, either lay person or priest (124–153). He also stressed the need for a high level of approval from the hierarchy, the development of internships and the need for a significant level of acceptance at grass

roots level. Burkart's insights and recommendations helped to guide the research questions.

1.1.3 The research questions – theological and pastoral.

The following questions found a tight focus in the Aspendale project and were also expressed in the documents leading to the Tomorrow's Church Report. Later in this chapter, a review of contemporary themes explores literature that highlights the importance of these questions for Aspendale.

- Can we define the role of the ordained minister at a point in history when non-ordained religious and lay people are permitted to undertake many of their traditional responsibilities?
- How can we understand and define the difference between ordained and non-ordained ministries?
- Has the established and traditional role of the priest become an anachronism?
- Is there an intentional process for the development of complementary formation programmes for ordained and non-ordained pastoral leaders in the emerging Church?
- As numbers expand, how do we define the status of non-ordained pastoral leaders? Are current definitions being reviewed in the light of developments?
- Are lay pastoral leadership roles to be considered as interim solutions until new strategies are devised for the recruitment of priests? Does this imply that these roles become redundant when a priest becomes available and, if this is the case, what message does that communicate about the right of non-ordained people to use their gifts in building up the community?

One of the significant issues for the pastoral leader at Aspendale centred on the dilemma of leading a parish community on a daily basis as a non-ordained person. He was not allowed to lead the community in its Eucharistic worship and there were ramifications for the anointing of the sick and reconciliation.[14] There was the possibility of a similar level of confusion for any priest appointed to be 'sacramental minister' of a

[14] See Terry Curtin's personal account of this dilemma (2000, 19–20). Consider also Karl Rahner's discussion of the tensions, both theological and pastoral, that emerge from this situation (1983, 57–62).

parish that was being pastorally cared for by a lay leader.[15] Women occupied the majority of pastoral leadership roles in Australia and this raised issues concerning the attitude of the hierarchy to the role and status of women in the Church.[16] Given the proliferation of non-ordained pastoral ministries, the Church was confronted with the question of recognising a new form of official ministry rather than continuing to develop a replacement (perhaps temporary) for the ordained. The position and status of these ministries was an important issue as the Aspendale appointment was confirmed.

1.2 Contemporary Themes of Change and Transition 1980–2000

The two decades that embraced the Aspendale Project were significant for the wealth of research on the impact of post-Vatican 2 trends in collaborative ministry. Sofield and Juliano developed *Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines* from insights and research gathered over more than five years of workshops that explored the topic and refined emerging themes. They integrated literature from an intensive period of inquiry and theological reflection upon "the universal invitation to ministry which has always been present in the Church, but has become more prominent since the Second Vatican Council" (1987, 16).[17]

1.2.1 The challenges of collaborative ministry

Sofield and Juliano outlined the four normative stages in the Church's response to the transition from a traditional style of ministry to collaborative ministry where all Christians, ordained and non-ordained, responded to their baptismal call to work together (18–19). I have underlined the key issues we will explore through this project.

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[15] Priests demonstrated different responses. Some were threatened, others responded positively. William Rademacher underlined the key themes that need addressing for shared ministry to be effective (1996, 176–182) and Curtin again reflects on this personally as the pastoral leader at Aspendale (19-20).

[16] Bob Dixon and Sharon Bond noted that 94% of the non-ordained leaders were women (1991).

[17] The authors cite affirmation of this post-conciliar challenge in an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 ("A Message to the People of God." *Origins*. No. 27: 449). This document exhorted "all the faithful to participation and co-responsibility at all levels" (1987, 16).

Stage 1. Vatican II calls all Catholics to a life of holiness, ministry and community.[18]

Stage 2. There follow twenty years of experience as the Church sponsored, exercised and wrestled with the changes involved in the unfolding of a new set of ministry paradigms for both laity and priests.[19]

Stage 3. A process of education, dialogue and reflection then develops amongst those engaged at parish, diocesan and national level in promoting, exploring and researching the impact of collaborative ministry. The identification of this need for education, dialogue and reflection helped to focus this literature review. These three factors are essential for effective transition to stage four.[20] The Aspendale project joined a galaxy of models and experiments throughout the world that challenged the vision and flexibility of many within the hierarchy who found change difficult. This study will affirm that such ferment required leadership committed to pastoral care based on theological reflection and developmental theory that had been accessible for many years and certainly during the Aspendale decade (Groome 1980; Kegan 1982; Fowler 1981; 1984; 1987; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 1996; 2000).

Stage 4. Action, expressed as a commitment to collaboration as an operational norm, is characterised by a willingness to continue with new models of ministry even when implementation is difficult. Continuing dialogue from grass roots level up to the Vatican is essential.[21]

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[18] See also the 1988 document in which Pope John Paul II affirms the role and identity of the laity - *Christifideles Laici* (n. 23). According to the *Tomorrow's Church - Discussion Document* that was provided in 1993 for the parishes of Melbourne, the term "ministry is used in a variety of ways. At times it is applied to the ordained ministry only, at others to every form of Christian service" (5).

[19] The *Tomorrow's Church Report* of March 1994 followed the *Discussion Document*. It highlighted John Paul II's 1992 exhortation on the formation of priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. John Paul II said that every Christian vocation, whatever shape it takes, is a gift from God to build up the Church and increase the Kingdom of God in the world (n. 35). The Church fulfils her mission when she guides all the faithful to discover and live his or her own vocation in freedom and to bring it to fulfilment in love (n. 40).

[20] Even though all Christians have a vocation, not everyone is called to the priesthood. The *Tomorrow's Church Report* affirmed the diversity of ways of expressing a vocation. The Task Group believed that "Melbourne and all Australian dioceses ought to recognise and understand the implications for our Church that significant numbers of committed Catholic people are urging a re-examination of the criteria for ordination" (18). John Paul II taught in *Christifideles Laici* that "one and all are called to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God according to the diversity of callings and situations, charisms and ministries ... It is a variety that makes the riches of the Church more vital and concrete" (n. 45).

[21] During the early 1980s the authors collected "insights and observations gleaned from five years of conducting workshops and courses" (12). They analysed the responses and the emerging themes became key elements in their text. Working with practitioners in this way acts as a form of member checking and

Sofield and Juliano estimated that collaboration prior to the 1990's was still within the third stage and defined collaborative ministry as

> the identification, release and union of the gifts of all baptised persons. The belief that every baptised person is gifted and called to ministry is the basis for collaboration. The concept of giftedness is central to an understanding and implementation of collaborative ministry (11).[22]

As with many of the contemporary post-conciliar projects that William Rademacher called "experiments in partnership ministry," collaboration was "undergoing the normal growing pains of new Church structures and at times this caused tension" with what he called "pre-Vatican II pyramid structures" (1996, 169).[23] The Melbourne Pilot Project sought to integrate the role of lay leader and the accompanying complexity reflected Rademacher's sentiment in his historical survey of lay ministry.

> Thus we see that an important function in the **actual achievement** of shared ministry for the upbuilding of the Church is the on-going **integration** and **coordination** (my emphasis) of the ministers and their charisms (173).[24]

This presents a complex mix of tasks. Integration is not possible without formation and theological reflection (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995a; 1995b). Coordination is not

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enhances external validity. Robson, following Lincoln and Guba (1985), suggests that "checking with those from whom the data are derived gets to the heart of credibility" (1993, 404).

[22] In the first year of *Pacifica*, (1, no. 2) Peter Malone describes Dennis Edwards' *Called to be Church in Australia* as "a theologian's attempt to communicate beyond peers to a readership eager for understanding of church and eager for praxis" (1988, 223). This description fits the mood of the era and is a part of the emancipation of the contribution of lay theology through reflective practice. Edwards' outline of *communio* is based upon the work of Ludwig Hertling (1972) and Walter Kaspar's pastoral interpretation (1986). Edwards uses this concept to outline the role of the ordained minister as a sacramental sign of fellowship within the Church. For Edwards, *communio* has a high relational and mutual value and expresses "the deeply felt need of our time, the need for real relationships and for community; this need is nothing else, I believe, than a conscious or unconscious search for that *communio* with God and our sisters and brothers which is offered us in Jesus Christ" (1987, 91). Kaspar alludes to *Lumen Gentium* (n. 10) and states that this concept was "fundamentally intended in the doctrine of the common priesthood of all the baptised" (1986, 114). Earlier in his article Kaspar had argued that *communio* referred "to the essential concern from which the Church comes and for which it lives. *Communio* does not designate the **structure** of the Church but its **essence**, (my emphasis) or as the Council says: its mystery" (103).

[23] Even within the last few years it is of note that a document on *Lay Ecclesial Ministry* was passed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 15 2005). There was still debate over whether the term "ministry" should be used to refer to laypersons working on behalf of the Church. The Editorial from *In The Vineyard* January 16 2006, reported that Cardinal Avery Dulles verbally defended the use of the word for laypersons noting that it was in keeping with the documents of the Holy See.

[24] Rademacher follows Karl Barth's image of a Church under the direction of "the Lord whose purpose and plan are concealed, or are revealed and made known only in the orders which He continually gives ... In this building new dispositions may be made at any time " (1958, 631).

possible if those in leadership cannot themselves integrate and reflect on their leadership style (Murnion 1996; 2000; Daneels 1998; Gill 2005). "Actual achievement" for Sofield and Juliano is transition into stage four and requires both integration and reflection. In Melbourne the *Tomorrow's Church*[25] project responded to the shortage of priests and the new directions in lay ministry in a way that Archbishop Little described as "reflective, prayerful and practical" (1994, 3). How effective was the Melbourne response? To answer this question and be true to the themes that emerged, the following literature review has four goals.

- Describe and evaluate the many layers of theological, historical and cultural themes that influenced the planning and context of the Aspendale project from 1980–2000.
- Identify themes and pressure points upon the Archdiocesan leadership groups who wrestled with new patterns of ministry.
- Generate a subsequent literature review from themes that emerged from the Aspendale case study. This follows Glaser's preference for an expanding literature review guided by emerging themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1992).[26]
- Clarify and focus the emerging themes and validate them by research triangulation.

When the new Archbishop terminated the Aspendale experiment the research findings and recommendations lost a destination but the parish continued to have a voice as it prompted the literature review and analysis that is found in Chapter 4 – Locating the Aspendale Story.

1.2.2 The winds of change in Australia

A decade before the Aspendale project, Edmund Campion, a popular Australian Catholic historian, suggested that

> something new was being born in the shell of the old order ... The lack of direction, sense of drift or even collapse that characterised the 1970s have given way to a new realism based on theological hope (1987, 248).[27]

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[25] (i) *Tomorrow's Church: Planning for Leadership in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Discussion Document.* May 1993. (ii) *Tomorrow's Church Report: A Plan for Leadership.* March 1994.

[26] "For Glaser, [reviews] should be avoided until the first core variable or category has emerged. Only then should the substantive area relating to that variable or category be reviewed and from there the literature review should be on-going" (Grbich 1999, 174).

Michael Mason, a Melbourne sociologist-priest quoted in the Melbourne *Age* on 11 May 1989, used the lens of hard data and statistics and offered a different perspective. He sounded a grim and foreboding warning that "the body is bleeding ... at its growth points - youth, those entering mixed marriages and young parents." Mason noted that between 1966 and 1981 the Australian Catholic Church lost one million adherents and the future scenario was not going to improve.[28] Two years earlier Greg Sheridan in *The Weekend Australian* of October 24-25 1987 (a Canberra-based national newspaper) lamented other research that documented "The Church in Decline: A Cultural Crisis" (22). The Church had taken this data seriously but the context could not be defined by statistics. It was an era of optimism that bore the hallmarks of Campion's new realism. This was based on a theological hope where the challenges had become points of theological reflection, innovation and risk. Mason used words similar to those of Campion ("lack of direction; drift; collapse"), to warn that delay would extend the "in-between time of chaos, confusion, formlessness and distress - a time which has already begun." He challenged the Church to prepare for:

- new patterns of ministry (through trial and discernment of calling and spiritual gifts) and intentional formation of lay leaders;[29]
- continued experimentation with local and trans-parish renewal strategies to determine which ones best fitted local needs;
- the general alerting of active Catholics ... and their preparation for recognising gifts of ministry in other laity and the acceptance of ministry at their hands (1983, 43).[30]

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[27] Campion cites: the increasing numbers of new Catholics, many through adult instruction courses; growing enrolments at Catholic schools; cultural and contextual sensitivity in liturgical renewal; a deeper commitment to indigenous spirituality and the integration of their values in liturgical areas; a more politically active role in social justice issues; the widespread influence of the charismatic renewal movement; ecumenical dialogue with other faith traditions; the spread of the Antioch Youth Movement; and even the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1986 where vast crowds of people "demonstrated, if nothing else, their comfortableness at calling themselves Catholic" (1987, 247).

[28] Mason is no mere statistician. As a theologian, social scientist and parish planner he stressed the need to take seriously the development of lay ministries. The quotation used in the *Age* appeared in *The Australasian Catholic Record* six years earlier (1983, 38). The newspaper article assumed that Mason's warning was still relevant and even more urgent.

[29] Camille Paul records that "in the mid-1970s another milestone occurred when lay women and men were allowed to study at the seminaries. Certainly, the numbers of laity studying for theology degrees were not excessive, but many attended specialised courses such as Scripture or Church History. The Aquinas Academy had been operating in Sydney for many years, but now their courses expanded and new centres were established in outer suburbs" (1995, 92).

[30] These tasks echo the transitional themes expressed in Rademacher's historical surveys (1991; 1996).

These questions had been taking shape amongst lay leaders for a number of years. A founding group of three lay pastoral workers came together in May 1981 for the first time. 27 people representing 23 Melbourne parishes began meeting in August 1983. They prepared a report that integrated experience, theology, culture and tradition in order to improve contemporary practice.[31] These lay pastoral workers, the Melbourne Lay Pastoral Workers Group (MLPWG), were a theologically reflective force 15 years before the Aspendale project began. Their report (1984, 35–40) reveals a shift from practice to praxis (Groome 1980; Browning 1991). Positive responses to their feedback signalled a deeper commitment to lay ministry in Melbourne that eventually stimulated the Aspendale project. The feedback progressed from reviews of roles and responsibilities to theological reflection on the context of ministry, the vocation and call of laity, and the future of collaborative ministry. The group evaluated theological education, spiritual and personal formation, specialist ministry skills, employment conditions, ministry identity and relationship to priests.

The report is in two parts. Theological reflection on lay pastoral ministry is followed by an agenda of practical employment issues. This document is similar in scope and content to two documents produced over a decade later in the United States - *Center Papers* numbers 7 and 8 (1995). In *Pastoral Coordinators and Canon Law*, Sharon Euart outlines the canonical considerations for parishes without a resident pastor. In *Pastoral Coordinators: Parish Leadership Without a Resident Pastor* Karen Smith covers roles, relationships and responsibilities of a pastoral associate. Canon 517.2 deals with appointments of lay persons to leadership roles. This canon allows a bishop, when there is a shortage of priests, to "entrust participation in the pastoral care of a parish to a deacon, a layperson, or a community of persons with a priest supervising pastoral care" (Smith 1995, 4). *Tomorrow's Church Report* affirms the key role of the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor who "represents the parish in all juridical affairs as per canon 532." Regular visits to the parish ensure "that the pastoral responsibilities of canons 528, 529, and 530 are being carried out by those designated to do so" (1994, 24). The first part concludes

[31] Only four members of this group had formal theological training but "over half the group reported involvement in 'in-service' training and ... part-time studies in the areas of theology or pastoral ministry"

with a clear position statement (using references to Pope Paul VI, Scripture and writings from Vatican II) that set the scene for future planning.[32]

> ... we see the Church as a sharing of ministries which are gifts of the spirit for the sharing of the Good News. We do not see the Church as a pyramid. We believe that Christians today are called to a Church apostolate, not just as a lay apostolate, not just as a clergy apostolate, but to a community apostolate in which all the baptised are called to various ministries in the common task of evangelisation; and all are co-responsible (36).

In 1971 the Australian Bishops' Conference began to plan a National Pastoral Institute of Religious Education (NPI). When the Institute closed in 1988 there were three diploma courses in ministry, social communications and education for justice, a youth leadership course and a ten-day residential leadership course. Brian Kelty's commentary on their charter suggests that the curriculum allowed for the equipping of students for "needs seen in a total pastoral setting" and "pastoral tasks beyond the classroom" (2005, 152, f/n 25).

> It is not the case that there was a lack of other institutions of higher learning in Australia during this period, such as the seminaries and the Catholic teachers' colleges. NPI was unique in both its methodology and implied theology (153).

This developing responsibility for lay formation was supported by the new *Code of Canon Law* (1983). James Esler comments that "probably no part ... will be more scrutinised than that pertaining to the laity. One obvious reason is that most members of the Church belong to the laity" (1983, 363). By the mid to late 1980's the MLPWG was already a powerful reflective force that was demonstrating a commitment to theological study; reflection upon practice; a keen desire to minister even when marginalised from

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(1984, 38). Their paper demonstrates skills in theological reflection as experience, theology, culture and tradition introduced new praxis (Browning 1991; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 1996; 2000).

[32] The article moves easily from Scripture (Luke 22:27ff; Ephesians 4) to Vatican documents such as *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Writers demonstrate the ability to bring data, experience, observations and insights into a reflective conversation with tradition in a way that mirrors the process of Fuellenbach's approach to theological reflection (2002). The Whiteheads describe the three sources of ministerial decision-making as faith tradition, personal and communal experience and contemporary culture (1995). For Kinast "appreciation for the role that the sense of the faithful has played in history encourages contemporary communities of faith to engage their tradition actively rather than submissively as they respond to challenges" (2000, 8).

positions of power; and a commitment to the re-visioning, preparation and leadership of worship. These collaborative influences were the hallmarks of lay ecclesial ministers.[33]

It would seem however that few of their practical and employment concerns had been addressed in the interim. Research on more than ten years of ministry by Australian Pastoral Associates concluded that they were a highly committed and experienced group with a strong vocational drive (Dixon and Bond 2000; 2001). There was still a need for the provision of more extensive formation in theology and ministry, precisely the issue that the associates themselves had raised in 1984. Many also found it difficult to work as pastoral associates for financial reasons,

> and also believe it is difficult to move to a new position ... many do not have written job descriptions and most do not have written contracts. ... In the absence of such conditions, there is likely to be a more rapid turnover ... and consequently slower growth in the quality of this form of ministry (Dixon and Bond 2001, 7).[34]

The evolutionary nature of this new group of Pastoral Associates raised questions of identity for both lay and ordained. These issues had been experienced for many years in other countries. The Church sensed the loss of secure moorings as traditional roles were challenged, and a feeling of "homelessness" characterised new experiences, albeit confronting and exciting. David Tracy describes this "not-at-homeness" as a basic issue of the early 80s as familiar, historical structures were being eroded (1981). Denis Edwards also describes the previous generation as having a high

> degree of uniformity of beliefs, discipline and customs. It was easy to feel part of this world-wide Church. We had a sense of being at home in a world of shared values. Now much of that old sense of solidarity has disappeared and the old uniform Church has gone (1987, 62).

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[33] See also John Wilcken's review of *Models of Catholic Theology, 1950-1990*. He affirmed the value of dogma proposed by the structured, hierarchical Church in order to establish the identity of Catholic tradition. However in the 1990s it had to be interpreted through the criteria of an egalitarian approach to ministry, treatment of the poor and oppressed, dignity and equality for women and the rights of indigenous peoples (1993, 333-341).

[34] Dixon and Bond reported on data from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey that focused on Pastoral Associates. A 2001 survey was also anticipated. This survey planned to include formation issues and assumed continuing research, reflection and modified practice.

The Australian journal *Compass: A Review of Topical Theology*[35] celebrated 25 years of ministry in 1991.[36] In the jubilee edition Michael Putney wrote of a contemporary Australian theology "now quite self-consciously aware of its context" (1991, 31). Neil Ormerod emphasised that this theology "must become more contextual, more concrete" if it were to become "a larger theology which ... touches deep chords in human experience, a theology with greater flesh and blood" (1991, 29). Ormerod's evocative words indicate the struggle to contextualise faith and tradition and foreshadow methods of theological reflection that take seriously the factors of sociology, experience and culture.[37] Anthony Kelly confessed that his "own theological effort would be seriously truncated if it did not base itself more consciously" on an Australian context (1991, 22). For John Kenny, one of the tasks of theology was to "sail the steady, equatorial line of truth between the Scylla and Charybdis of entrenched conservatism and irresponsible progressivism." He declared how deep his "pride and joy [had] been at Vatican II when the Church said 'yes' to the Holy Spirit" (1991, 23). Gideon Goosen cautiously foreshadowed the difficulty many were to experience in creating a dialogical climate where Campion's new realism could blossom and grow. He warned that not all were able to change and move on.

> The pre-Vatican II theology and its supporters are still very much around. So are the ultra-progressives who often forget that we had a past. There have been tensions between the Magisterium and theologians. A system of fair hearing for theologians in the spirit of that prophetic document *Justice in the World* (1971) is still not in place. Greater communication and mutual support between bishops and theologians could do a lot to ease these tensions (1989, 15).

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[35] The first title, *Compass Theology Review*, ceased in 1990 with Volume 24, Number 4.

[36] Editor Peter Malone stated that founder-editor Dennis Murphy wanted the journal to be "a compass to help people find their way as Catholics" (1987, inside front cover). For the twenty-fifth anniversary, a pantheon of Australian Catholic theologians, mostly from Melbourne, filled the pages of Volume 25, Summer 1991. They wrote with excitement and realistic urgency, welcomed the new Australian Catholic University, and called for more indigenous "Aussie" theologising and a positive embrace of change.

[37] The Aspendale study makes extensive use of these three factors through practical theologians and theological educators whose writings span the era of the project: Thomas Groome (1980; 1987; 1989; 1991); Don Browning (1991); Robert Kinast (1996; 2000); James and Evelyn Whitehead (1980; 1984; 1991; 1995). Qualitative research methodology employed in the report was developed from the work of Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985; 1986); Max van Manen (1990); Robert Stake (1995); Marjorie DeVault (1999); and Carol Grbich (1999). These writers enabled the integration of narrative themes and lived experience, what van Manen's sub-title describes as "Human Science for an Action-Sensitive Pedagogy" (1990).

It is in line with Sofield and Juliano's position to argue that stage 3-4 transition can be assisted by "communication and mutual support" that assumes the ability to engage and reflect upon the exploration of theologians and the pastoral dilemmas (eg. the priest-shortage) of bishops.

There was an occasional fierce conflict. Anthony Campbell's passionate response to articles in *The Australian* on the resurrection of Christ supported the integrity and the faith of priests prepared to be honest and vulnerable in the midst of "questions of recent theological speculation about how the resurrection might have occurred" (1989, 45). Peter Malone described the journal's role in a robust era of Catholic theological reflection.

> Theology today is not just a repetition of the Magisterium nor a neatly disciplined textbook activity. It is, as always, lived faith, faith experience of heart and mind, seeking (which implies that we are still searching) both understanding and expression. *Compass* aims to be a review for that kind of theology in and for Australia (1987, 1).

In the late 1980s, Gerald O'Collins outlined a tentative agenda for fundamental theology in the next decade. He foresaw a shift of focus from "the intellectual life of journal and university to the praxis of faith in the barrio," and that "dialogue with God in the context of worship" would be another priority (1988, 290). This article in the first volume of the new Australian journal *Pacifica* suggested that the dialogue partners of fundamental theology demonstrated three styles:

> **Style One (Head).** Dialogue with a scholar in a university setting.
>
> **Style Two (Hands).** Dialogue with the community in a barrio that symbolises all those who are marginalised.
>
> **Style Three (Heart).** Dialogue with the community or the individual who experiences the divine through liturgy and prayer (296-297).

The expanding diversity of lay ministries and multiplying numbers of ministers provided a new dialogue partner for a Church that now embraced all three styles.

National Bicentennial festivities in 1988 celebrated the birth of a nation in a time of creative optimism and reflection on indigenous and national values. *Pacifica* first appeared in February 1988 and, as noted earlier, many early numbers featured

Melbourne Catholic contributors. In his review of 25 years of Australian Catholic biblical studies, Rod Doyle suggested that this journal was designed to "[embrace] theological studies generally" and provide a "stress on contemporary relevance: three of the five articles are addressed to the here and now." Doyle noted that the arrival of *Pacifica*

> herald[ed] the development of an initiative which has already been glimpsed in Australian Catholic life: pastoral concern, whether academic or popular in its expression, lies at the base of so many published contributions of scholars in this country (1988, 44).

Doyle highlighted the need for theological reflection based upon pastoral insight and sensitivity and *Compass* and *Pacifica* encouraged pastoral integration of theology and practice both ecumenically and within the Catholic Church. Kelty indicates that prior to this era too "little attention was paid to the nature of pastoral theology as a reflexive exercise" and this exercise could not be "short-circuited by simply applying the latest theological insights" (2005, 148). Kelty cites the influence of Tracy and his emphasis on praxis, "not as theory's application or even goal," but as "theory's own originating and self-correcting foundation" (1981, 69) and this certainly characterises the spirit of inquiry during these years.

Within the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the early 1990s still looked forward to more extensive development of lay ministries. The discussion papers for the *Tomorrow's Church* project of May 1993 emphasised the process of change and evolution that accompanied old dilemmas and new possibilities. Tracy's vague sense of homelessness seems to have given way to the creative doubt and questioning of the pilgrim on a journey where the destination is still unclear. It is the journey that matters not the destination because, as the discussion papers affirmed, since Vatican II

> we have seen a marvellous growth in the sharing of ministry by a broad range of the People of God and a gradual refining of the leadership role of the priest. This process is *still unfolding* ... *Structures of partnership and consultation* ... are of *paramount importance* here (6).

Three themes in this quotation delineate the role and purpose of the Aspendale project:

1. "... still unfolding" indicates a commitment to a mind open to what has yet to emerge. Grounded theory complements theological reflection in this process.[38]
2. "... partnership and consultation" indicates the need for collaborative dialogue with key personnel, associations and agencies.
3. "structures of partnership and consultation are of paramount importance" indicates that it is the process and the intentional breadth of the dialogue that matter rather than particular outcomes, favoured models of ministry or theological preferences.[39]

This study sought to evaluate whether these ideals were normative and respected or whether particular theologies, partners or models of leadership sought to dominate. The survey therefore extended to the wider Catholic world in order to trace the themes that influenced the Church as a whole and Melbourne in particular as decisions were made about the Aspendale project.

1.2.3 The winds of change internationally

Two pivotal moments in history were provided by the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965), and the Revised Code of Canon Law (1983). The response of Australian lecturer Camille Paul was typical. *Lumen Gentium's* "vision of the laity is like a breath of fresh air and can be read and re-read with enthusiasm" (1995, 90). The Revised Code extended lay participation in consultation at many levels and specifically, hands-on leadership in pastoral contexts. Paul notes Richard Cunningham's insistence upon a consistent and mature response from both hierarchy and laity. Apart from these canons, lay people possessed powers such as

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[38] Data from Aspendale was intended for partnership and consultation. In grounded theory, theory (theology) is "initially developed and then further refined and tested in a continuous unending process" (Sarantakos 1993, 270). Temporary hypotheses are developed through a process of induction. A process of deduction is then used to derive implications or hypotheses that can then be verified or tested. This process integrates well with contemporary methods of theological reflection that engage theory/theology through a variety of lenses (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 1996).

[39] This involves relationship and function (Who/What groups?), theory and theology (Which discipline/school?). Edwards states that "[p]raxis does not reject theory, but rather includes it. Praxis holds theory and action together ... it is a return to the authentic Christian tradition" (1987, 48). For Fowler, "practical theological inquiry and reflection attend to the resources provided by both theological and non-theological disciplines which can deepen its penetration of its sources and challenges" (1987, 20). Cahalan's discussion of the historical development of practical theology, and in particular what she calls the Chicago "late modern option" of Browning, bluntly states that "practical theology begins when secular and religious practices and their meanings are questioned and challenged" (2005, 68).

> the power of numbers, of finances, of public opinion, of *sensus fidelium*, of conscience and the radical power of shaking the dust from their feet as they exit or worse, stay on apathetically (Cunningham 1983, 37).

The 1987 Synod on the Laity provided impetus for exploration of lay ministry and although the level of dialogue was not consistent, the process had a positive feel.[40]

> Despite all the negatives, consultation within the Church was a step forward from the usual unilateral decision-making, and provided some form of dialogue between the hierarchy and ordinary members of the laity who would normally have no voice (Paul 1995, 94).

What were the questions and issues that flowed into this Synod on the Laity? Fifteen years after the Council, David Power's discussion appeared under an intriguing, forward-looking and hopeful title - *Gifts that Differ: Lay Ministries Established and Unestablished.* He highlighted areas of inquiry surrounding the issues of identity and sense of homelessness that characterised this era (1980, 54). They resembled a second set of research questions that emerged as the Aspendale Project commenced.

- How is lay ministry both complementary to, and distinct from, that of the ordained?
- How can the Church develop a refined definition of lay involvement in mission and ministry?
- What are the practical guidelines and theological criteria for differentiation between lay ministries?
- What are the forms of recognition, both ceremonial and functional, that are appropriate for ministries once they are differentiated?
- What is the relationship between liturgical ministry and other ministries, whether exercised by the same person or by different persons?
- What is the nature of corporate responsibility for the whole ecclesial community's mission in and to the world? Who exercises this mission and how is it exercised?
- How will ministry be structured and on what principles will specific ministries be undertaken?

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[40] "[A] certain amount of hurried discussion took place involving only a small percentage of the laity" due to a rushed schedule and poor communication. Paul assesses that "this process still left one group (clergy) attempting to evaluate the lived experience of a very different group of people, particularly the lived experience of women" (Paul 1995, 94).

Power discusses these questions in detail (113–132). His section heading "The On-going Present", and his chapter title "From the Edge to the Centre", indicate the fluidity of the period and the importance of a lay voice. He "reflect[s] upon the development of lay ministries as a grass-roots movement, postulating the restructuring of ministries" (131). He believes that the boundary between lay and ordained has become blurred in some parts of the Catholic world as many people exercise the role of presidency in community and liturgy without ordination.

> [T]he limit placed upon them is that of not being allowed a full Eucharist ... either by appointment by the clergy or by choice of the community, or by a mixture of both, they have acceded to a role which calls out for the laying-on of hands but remain unordained. The Church's authority is unwilling as a rule to ordain anyone who is not male, celibate, seminary-trained, and dependent on office for stipend and sustenance. We can go ahead for a long time with the status quo thus established by practice and accommodation, while pleading for more "vocations," when in fact the situation is telling us that the conception of the ordained minister is what needs to be changed (131).

Data analysis reflected these dilemmas underlying the role and identity of the Lay Pastoral Leader at Aspendale.[41] These thematically-derived questions all emerged from the Aspendale project and other research and literature. They require a process of reflection and analysis that is inclusive rather than exclusive, focused on complementarity rather than difference and collegial in ethos rather than feudal. Donald Cozzens outlined the feudal remnants of power and authority that steal the voices of those who would either protest or simply seek debate (2004, 9–24). He notes that one sad effect of this subtle but pervasive influence

> is the curtailing of honest dialogue and conversation between laity and church authorities. In the feudal, clerical world, even clearly non-dogmatic disciplines ... are treated with such external reverence that they take on the mantle of doctrine. To question them is to be disloyal. To call for open discussion and dialogue about these issues is to be dismissed as a radical dissenting liberal harbouring an agenda designed to undermine the Church (23).

[41] The pastoral leader was very aware of these complex issues of identity and practice. See his assessment in *Compass* (2001, 12–16). Discussion appears later in this report in the analysis of data. However I note that the adjective the pastoral leader used to describe the model is a peculiarly Australian one. "It's a crook model!" To use the words of Power from the early 1980s the Melbourne Church had "acceded to a role which calls out for the laying-on of hands" (1980, 131) and the dilemmas became apparent immediately.

It is for this reason that the Aspendale pastoral leader, as we shall see in the data, decided to keep his thoughts to himself. He did not want to be seen to be undermining the Church's authority or in any way eroding the identity of visiting priests. His role placed him at the pivotal point of this issue and one of the tasks of the study was to determine the nature of the pressure upon him, upon the members of the parish and upon those who created the appointment.

1.2.4 Are there still two classes: clergy and laity?

Thomas O'Meara, following Yves Congar, calls for "a coherent theology of ministry which replaces the clergy-laity structure with a group of concentric circles" (1983, 165). This is more than theological precision, it is a restructuring of power and the dynamics of collaborative ministry. Congar's position is based on mutuality, power sharing and respect for the identity of each part of the whole. The work of Congar and O'Meara was important to the Melbourne Lay Pastoral Worker's Group and their charter statement echoes Congar's priorities: "We do not see the Church as a pyramid. We believe that Christians today are called to a Church apostolate, not just as a lay apostolate, not just as a clergy apostolate, but to a community apostolate" (1984, 36). For O'Meara any defence of the distinction between clergy and laity

> has its source in a legitimate anxiety that the denial of this patristic and medieval theological sociology will lead to a church without diversity and without ecclesial competence. We would argue that just the opposite is true: the clergy-laity distinction suppresses diversity and standards of competency in ministry (165–166)

O'Meara delineates the breakdown of this clergy-laity distinction. He notes Congar's move to embrace a discussion that was no longer based on a priesthood < > laity dichotomy but a discussion around the dual theme of "ministries" and "service and community". O'Meara traced Congar's thinking over two decades as he compared more generic work from *Towards a Theology of the Laity* (1953), with insights from *Ministères et Communion Ecclésiale* (1971). I found that Congar was honest and clear. "I have come to see that the pastoral reality described by the New Testament imposes a view much richer" than the old hierarchical reality (1971, 9). This richness influenced the Second Vatican Council in the area of ecclesiology and laity and in the relationship

between hierarchy and laity (Congar 1965). According to Power, Congar balanced the secular characteristic of the lay office on the one hand and their baptismal consecration on the other. This encouraged the Council "to place the Church and its mission in the world in a new perspective, and in so doing made it possible to approach the laity-clergy problem ... from a new angle" (1980, 44). O'Meara translates Congar's conclusion that effectively captures the focus of Power's six questions.

> We can say, in short, that Jesus instituted a structured community, a community holy, priestly, prophetic, missionary, apostolic with its centre, ministers - some freely raised up by the spirit, others ordained by the imposition of hands (1983, 165).

This conceptual reframing of the title "ministers" for all those who emerge from, and within, the community, reflects Congar's image of concentric circles, described by O'Meara as "realms of ministry but which are diverse in goals and intensity" (167). He warns that this diversity must not be homogenised into the word "ministry" because

> ... fragmentary descriptions coming from the first churches have not told us all we want to know about primal ministry. They have not sorted out ministries into the human and the divine nor have they offered precise offices with canonised names (1983, 92).[42]

Congar foreshadowed the essence of this complementarity and diversity. The Mass is where "all forms of priesthood are operative in their mutual organic relationships and connections ... making real the Church's symphonic unity, different members filling diverse roles in the oneness of the whole" (1965, 458).[43] If the Mass, framed this way, is a type of parable or image of complementarity then the experience of Christian community must also become a guiding principle. Edward Schillebeeckx wrote the concluding article in the 1980 edition of *Concilium*. He focused on the "Right of the Community to a Priest," and described emerging models of lay ministry as examples of an alternative praxis that refused to wait for the existing system to change its

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[42] O'Meara describes the four characteristics of primal Christian ministry as:

1. a non-sacral office, it points to moments of God's presence in and after Jesus;
2. action because ministry is verbal and there is no gulf between title and work;
3. service to the kingdom of God because ministry is a visible expression of the existence, goal, and values of the kingdom of God;
4. universal and diverse because ministry is there for each baptised person.

monochrome approach to the shortage of priests, an approach that simply "evoke[d] the traditional image of the priesthood" (1980, vii). He claims that this did little to resolve the lack of Eucharistic celebration in many parishes throughout the world. He affirms the "many men and women giving themselves wholeheartedly and sometimes for many years to pastoral work in their Christian community" and suggests that this phenomenon of alternative praxis

> ... has a diagnostic significance with regard to the symptoms of serious sickness in the existing system and can function as a criticism of the ideology underlying the traditional practices. Christians instinctively recognise that the New Testament datum of the priority of the community over office ... is clearly expressed in this kind of alternative praxis (123).[44]

This is precisely the role that Aspendale could have exercised. The argument for the priority of community over office mirrors the tension between the priesthood of the laity and the priesthood of the clergy. A similar tension emerged in Aspendale. Schillebeeckx has an optimistic view of this tension.[45] He reframes the critical alternative communities

> as ferment in a universal process ... They occupy a marginal position, continuously stimulating Christian consciousness so the great Church will be made ready to receive another Church order which is more suitable for the modern world and its pastoral needs (127).

The *Tomorrow's Church Report* resonates with Schillebeeckx's rejection of a return to a limited vision of the traditional option when it declares that "it was not part of the Terms

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[43] In the inaugural edition of *Concilium*, Congar affirms that "through the incarnation of the Son, and the gift of the Spirit (the 'Promised One'), the People of God was given a status that can be expressed only in the categories and in the theology of the Body of Christ" (1965b, 16).

[44] John Collins modifies O'Meara's final point that "ministry is for each baptised person" (1983, 90) with his studies of *diakonia*. For 15 years his linguistic research on *diakonia* and the theology of the diaconate (1990; 1992; 2002), has argued for a far higher interpretation than that of servant or helper offering a service of love to those in need. He suggests the following meanings that the latest edition of the Bauer Danker Arndt Gingrich (BDAG) lexicon now adopts as entries: 'intermediary,' 'go-between/agent,' 'official duties,' 'functioning in the interests of a larger public,' 'office of the prophets and apostles,' 'rendering specific support,' 'service as attendant,' 'intermediary/courier,' and 'operates at the behest of a superior' (2000). Obviously not 'all' will be called to these high expressions of ministry, (bad news for some), but based on the identity of deacons in the New Testament, the criteria for selection for this high office has been expanded (good news for others) to include women and perhaps those who are married. The discussion will continue and is critical for the life of the Church in the midst of changing paradigms of ministry.

[45] Schillebeeckx and Congar, and the Council itself, gave expression and content to the questions raised much earlier. Pope Pius XII declared to the Consistory of Cardinals on February 26 1946 that the laity, the People of God, "must be ever more conscious not only that they belong to the Church but they are the Church."

of Reference to focus on the question 'How can we obtain more priests?'" (1994, 5). The questions based on the old paradigm should not hinder the possibility of new hypotheses. The Church was not going to discontinue the search for clerical vocations, it was a question of revised priorities. The *Discussion Guide* clarifies this point.

> Over time many ministries became overly concentrated in the ordained priest. Nevertheless, since Vatican II we have seen a marvellous growth in the sharing of ministry by a broad range of the people of God and a gradual refining of the leadership role of the priest. This process is still unfolding (1993, 5–6).

The Report outlines three basic questions for the Archdiocese of Melbourne that became an important part of the initial research on the Aspendale Pilot.

- What understanding of Church will sustain and continue to renew parish life?
- What leadership is needed to make that understanding a reality in parishes?
- Within the context of a declining number of priests, what changes are needed to provide that leadership (1994, 5)?

The three questions merge with the recommendations of Mason's earlier research (1983, 43), and his call for research into:

- new patterns of ministry and formation of lay leaders;
- experimentation with local and trans-parish strategies to match needs;
- preparing Catholics to recognise and affirm lay gifts for ministry (1983, 43).[46]

Each recommendation is pragmatically linked to the pastoral dilemmas caused by the shortage of priests. They have a broad, theologically reflective stance, particularly when linked to the two models proposed for Melbourne, the Parish Partnership Model and Pastoral Leader Model. There was no single focus on the role and identity of the priest in 1994 because vocations to the priesthood and emerging models of lay ministry were seen as conjoint themes. However, with the change of Archbishop in 1996 the Archdiocese moved back to a seemingly unilateral focus on the urgency of new vocations and exploration of a structure designed around a shrinking number of priests. *The Priests Deployment Committee: Draft Report* indicates a direct link between the decreasing number of priests and the task of this committee (1998, 21-22, 38). The focus of the Archbishop's covering letter and of the research was the role and tasks of priests.

[46] These three questions once again reflect Power's six areas of inquiry outlined earlier (1980, 54).

Responses from parishes called for the re-examination of criteria for ordination and a more inclusive planning strategy. Priests responded in a similar vein and expressed concerns about the workload (12). However, emerging themes of laity and leadership did not feature in this document's response to the shortage of priests. James Whitehead caught the liberating spirit of the earlier questions behind the project and he saw the threat of any clergy-lay distinction. He rejects clericalism that seeks "to exclude the non-ordained from leadership and to absorb the community's priestliness ... [and] invents the category of laity as an adversary" (1992, 27).[47] This adversarial approach was not a part of the pre-Aspendale experience. The Pastoral Leader Model strongly affirmed the role of the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor as a genuine partner in ministry who also served as a sacramental minister.[48] He also had an excellent, mutually affirming relationship with visiting priests and the elimination of the model by the new Archbishop was certainly not based on the lack of relational, collegial or numerical success.

Following his study of John Paul II's theology of priesthood, Timothy Costelloe points out the problem of theological dualism (1998). In spite of the Pope's emphasis on a servant theology of priesthood the problem of clericalism did not diminish and whilst it would be unfair to lay blame,

> his theology did at times appear to labour under the burden of a theological dualism that draws a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular, the holy and the profane, the Church and the world. It can be argued that it is precisely this dualistic approach which breeds clericalism by reserving the area of the 'sacred' to the clergy and committing the area of the 'secular' to the laity (2005, 10).[49]

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[47] Whitehead notes that clericalism is born when clerical officials build a privileged status for themselves through an authoritarian style, a rigidly hierarchical worldview or a consuming desire to defend the traditional privileges and power that attach to clergy. Cozzens puts it even more bluntly: "Clericalism is ... an attitude found in clergy who have made their status as priests and bishops more important than their status as baptised disciples of Jesus the Christ" (2004, 22).

[48] The *Tomorrow's Church* process clearly delineated the respective roles. A high level of mutual accountability balanced the job specification of the priest and lay leader (1994, 23-25). See Appendix 3.

[49] Costelloe suggests that John Paul's work supported the traditional perspective that saw the "laity standing on the side of the world, the secular and the profane" while the ordained stood "on the side of the Church, the sacred and the holy" (2005, 10). Costelloe identifies many of the Pope's writings that directly or indirectly support this understanding. He argues that it is then simple to create two classes - the clergy who manage the sacred, more important things of God, and the laity who manage the secular, less important things of the world. The laity are therefore understood as consumers of that which the clergy dispense. The Instruction of 1997, (*On Certain Questions*), was widely seen as a communications disaster (Brundell 1998), and in particular the document's ambiguous use of *munera* (functions), *officia* (offices), and *servitium* (service). Dialogue is not served well by the perceived authoritarian stance, and "clearly

An important section of *Lumen Gentium* highlights the question of order.

> Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ (no. 10).[50]

Costelloe noted that John Paul II frequently alluded to this text. Notwithstanding "the lack of precision in this conciliar formulation as regards the precise nature of the difference between the two ways of sharing in Christ's priesthood," the challenge of dialogue on exactly how they are ordered to one another still remains (2005, 7). Costelloe's conclusion echoes O'Meara and Congar's "concentric circles" concept of ordering the two dimensions of priesthood. He affirmed that the priesthood of the faithful (the priesthood of the Church, the priestly people of God) should be at the centre of any theology of priesthood and any theology of Church.

> The distinction between the common priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of the ordained ministry, which certainly exists and must not be abandoned or denied, must be conceived in terms of the latter existing within, and at the service of, the more fundamental reality of the former. Pope John Paul, then, is certainly correct when he repeatedly insists (PDV 16), that "the ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God" (1998, 379).

The ordained priest should always be classed as a member of the common priesthood of the faithful. For Costelloe, the concept of the Incarnation, that the Word of God became flesh in the person of Christ,

> is the very reality of the incarnation which destroys forever the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, and between the eternal and the temporal.

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confusion in language here can work to the confusion of roles of ordained and non-ordained" (Collins 1997, 9). The history of dialogue on this topic has been conflicted and problematic.

[50] *Lumen Gentium* includes a practical vision of how this theory could work. "Let sacred pastors recognise and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the lay people of the Church. Let them willingly make use of the laity's prudent advice ... confidently assign duties ... allowing them freedom and room for action ... Further let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative" (no. 37). This still has an underlying assumption that the ordained express their ministry in the spiritual order while the laity work within the temporal one. *Christifideles Laici* states that laity express "the unique character of their vocation" by "engaging in temporal affairs" and are thus "in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ" (no. 9). While this can be seen as complementary, the dominant culture, steeped in a hierarchical, dependent model, can create two classes of ministry from this perceived difference.

> Indeed the incarnation reveals the divine methodology for the Church's relationship to the world ... it is the Church and not some group within the Church, that is to understand itself as ... a continuation of the incarnation (335, f/n 32).

This has ecclesiological and missiological implications. In *Christifideles Laici* the "charisms, the ministries, the different forms of service exercised by the lay faithful exist in communion and on behalf of communion" (no. 20). The *Tomorrow's Church Report* used the word "ministry" to denote public activities undertaken in the name of the parish by an appointed and baptised person carrying out the Church's mission. All of these parishioners, many voluntary, are described as being

> in partnership with the priest as leaders in various aspects of parish mission ... it is clear that, whatever the flow of priestly vocations, or whatever the models of leadership ultimately adopted in Melbourne parishes, skilled and dedicated leaders in various ministries will be a most necessary element of the future (1994, 10).

How had this been expressed elsewhere within the Catholic Church? In the relaxed spirit of the era many more dioceses in the United States were opening their clergy education programs to laity and non-ordained religious. Sofield and Juliano concluded their study with reports of new initiatives in collaborative formation.

> In our experience, the sessions that combine clergy, laity and religious are the most stimulating and successful ones. When the opportunities for dialogue are available, many fantasies and stereotypes which interfere with meaningful collaboration are dispelled (1987, 134).

They painted a picture of mutuality, collegiality and respect where "workshops on collaboration, lay ministry, lay leadership and spirituality" challenged a hierarchical understanding of relationships dependent on priestly validation of ministry (133). This theme of partnership in a mission shared between priests and lay leaders was also assumed by the *Tomorrow's Church Report* and became a reality in Aspendale. Formation and education for ministry for lay leaders was seen to be a priority. Biblical and theological training was essential for theological formation through a "methodology of action and reflection" (1994, 11).

The evolutionary relationship between priests and laity was highlighted in the new *Code of Canon Law*. We have indicated Esler's comment that the section on the laity generated enormous interest. He also noted that the new Code postponed consideration of the specific difference between the ordained and the non-ordained until it has completed consideration of

> the responsibilities and obligations of all the faithful of Christ, ie. of the generic element. This part of the *Code* is truly momentous, for the sixteen canons which follow apply to the laity no less than pope, bishops, priests and those in consecrated life ... It constitutes a challenge to the whole Church: a challenge to implement, or vindicate where necessary, the rights in question; and a challenge to accountability in regard to responsibilities (1983, 372–373).

Eleven years later the *Tomorrow's Church* process and the Aspendale Project invited the Archdiocese to dialogue on the specific differences to see what had emerged. An important part of this dialogue was the continuing journey of implementing and researching the meaning of these canons through the appointment of a Lay Pastoral Leader. The research findings from this model were intended to provide further insight.

1.2.5 Collaborative ministry: the importance of stage 3–4 transition for Aspendale

Sofield and Juliano suggest that the four stages of response to collaborative ministry are predictable in spite of the complexity of diverse hierarchies, geographical regions, multicultural themes or historical shifts. Each situation is unique and some strategies may only work in a specific context but they discovered "four general principles which foster collaboration" and enable successful transition to the fourth stage (1987, 125):

1. Authentic dialogue marked by honesty, openness and frequency;
2. Collaboration based on giftedness rather than structure or reorganisation. Complementarity rather than competitive practice emerges from mutual discernment of gifts;[51]

[51] Consider the apostle Paul's order of *charisms ... ministries ... activities* (I Corinthians 12: 4-6). *Christifideles Laici* also refers to "the charisms, the ministries, the different forms of service exercised by the lay faithful exist in communion and on behalf of communion" (no. 20). There is no hierarchy of charisms.

3. Unnecessary and costly duplication must be avoided by institutions, dioceses and congregations committed to exploring joint programs;
4. Intentional development of opportunities and structures for collaboration as part of a future-oriented missiology (125–134).

This initial literature review engages three concurrent levels of communication: official Vatican documents; responses from Bishops' Conferences; and commentators appearing in books, journals or weekly publications. Following the 'data gathering' and 'data analysis' phase of the project the study looked for evidence of Sofield and Juliano's four general principles in Chapter 4- Locating the Aspendale Story, and Chapter 5 - Document Analysis. This more expansive literature review considered:

- Strategic Melbourne responses: *Tomorrow's Church: Planning for Leadership* (1994); the *Priests Deployment Committee: Draft Report* (1997);
- The Bishops of England and Wales' report on two years of grass-roots research, *The Sign We Give* (1995);
- The Instruction *On Certain Questions* (1997);
- A North American document from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions (1999)*;
- A selection of reports in *The Tablet* (London), articles from *Seminary Review* (USA), *Compass* and *The Australasian Catholic Record* (Australia). These sources complemented *Center Papers* from the National Pastoral Life Center (New York).

As we shall see in Chapter 4 (Locating the Aspendale Story) and Chapter 5 (Document Analysis), library research prompted by the Aspendale themes indicated responses that align in theological, dialogical and structural ways with Sofield and Juliano's third stage of development. This third stage is characterised as "Ambivalence" where there are attempts at collaboration but long-term commitments cannot be sustained in the face of difficulties. These difficulties may be local, diocesan, in the realm of official Vatican teaching or a combination of all three. Stage 3-4 transition expresses a belief in the value of collaboration but it may be tempered with fear. Some will fear "loss of prestige, power, control or identity. Others may be afraid of the unknown demands which may be placed upon them" (Sofield and Juliano 1987, 19), and may not have the reflective or formational skills to negotiate the dilemmas. Anxiety in

the face of difficulty is predictable and needs to be normalised or the venture will fail and there will be a return to the status quo. The decision of the new Archbishop to delete the Aspendale option became an important piece of systemic data in the process of determining the meaning of stage 3–4 for Melbourne.

Systems theory explores the dynamics of why any community, group, family or organisation may baulk at the possibility of maturing or persisting with what seems to be desirable change. It requires morphogenesis for the Church to engage the difficulty of change. Sotirios Sarantakis describes morphogenesis as the "ability to adapt to the outcomes of internal changes or external stressors" (1996, 14). Stage three, ambivalence, is a potential growth point where the option of homeostasis (adjusting to changes or stressors by restoring equilibrium/status quo) is a real possibility. Fear or conflict avoidance can induce people to reject the cost of change. Jack and Judith Balswick suggest that there is a natural tendency

> to respond in old, familiar ways to new situations (homeostasis). It is likely that these old ways will be inadequate, and the [group] will become stuck in them rather than be stirred up to operate on the morphogenetic level (1999, 42).

As will be seen from the data, responses to the new model of ministry at Aspendale revealed occasional ambivalence and anxiety blended with excitement and hope. Confusion and fear can be added to the mix of feelings.[52] Sofield and Juliano avoid a business model of management. They look for people to be "moved to action by their theology" in response to the urgency of statistics. This challenge should lead them to re-evaluate "their theological beliefs and decid[e] to move toward greater collaboration" (21).[53] Ambivalence, anxiety, confusion and fear are common responses to change that provide an opportunity for leaders to exercise skills in listening, dialogue and theological reflection. Another research task was to explore whether theological reflection characterised responses to 3–4 transition or whether fear of change became the

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[52] There was a widespread perception that fear motivated *On Certain Questions*. *The Tablet* published an editorial on 22 November 1997 under the headline "A rebuff to the Catholic laity," and used phrases such as "a sort of ecclesiastical apartheid" and "[f]ear is a bad counsellor."

[53] See also Anglican, Steven Croft's discussion of *diakonia, presbyteros* and *episcope*, and his critique of leadership models borrowed from the world of business (1999, 3–41). Methodist Lovett Weems argues for an integration of biblical study, theological reflection and a selective use of current management insights that is consistent with spiritual renewal. "People will always be weary of cures that don't cure, blessings that don't bless and solutions that don't solve" (1993, 136).

dominant force. Leaders are not called merely to be agents of change but agents of metanoia, grieving, transformation and spiritual development. This invitation to mature reflection and growth can facilitate a stage 3-4 transition where all parties remain committed in the face of frustration and conflict. Elaine Graham describes practical theology as the tool in trade of "transforming practice" (1996), where "the discipline of pastoral theology, reorientated for a postmodern age of uncertainty, provides a method for connecting theory and practice in a re-conception of faithful identity" (2000, 105).[54] Therefore listening and dialogue must be integrated with biblical and theological skills to achieve this "re-conception of faithful identity." Brian Kelty argues that pastoral practice "cannot simply become a delivery system for what is studied in biblical studies and systematic theology" (2005, 149). Deeper personal and social transformation and systemic change require a reflective capacity and the Aspendale Project acted as a probe designed to detect such transformation. The discipline of integration is committed to a pastoral theology that Graham calls

> an interpretative discipline enabling faith communities to give a public and critical account of their performative truth-claims. It attempts to capture critical glimpses of Divine activity amidst human practice (113).[55]

This dynamic and reflective capacity facilitates stage 3–4 transition, and any re-conception of identity must involve formational and reflective goals.

In 1987, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin joined a group of married and resigned priests in retreat. For some, this scenario would seem to be the very symbol of defeat and failure of nerve in the face of change. However David Rice cites Bernardin's concluding homily. This sermon issued a strong reminder that the Kingdom of God is present, particularly in the midst of struggle.

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[54] Pamela Couture and Rodney Hunter lament the post-World War II "bifurcation of pastoral theology from social ethics, increasing specialisation ... a focus on individuals and families almost to the exclusion of groups and communities, and a loss of connections with local congregations. Social and professional conflict created conflict in the core identities of many persons ... " (1995, 12–13).

[55] Tracy's energetic commitment to the hermeneutics of the relationship between experience and tradition (1975; reprinted 1988) was later expressed in five 'moments' where an interpretive methodology enables a community to engage seriously with a religious text or tradition (1981). The five moments are: the claims of the situation; the claims of tradition; the game of conversation; argument and suspicion; new possibilities for the future. This process describes, and thus normalises, the essence of struggle as communities face stage 3-4 transition.

> We can never give up, abandon the vigil, or assume that - for whatever reason - the issues we struggle with cannot somehow, some day, be worked out ... let's not give up on one another, the Church, or the belief that within this struggle, within this vigil for wisdom, we shall find wisdom sitting at our gate ... I promise to watch and struggle with you (Rice 1990, 250–251).

Bernardin will not forget his other loyalties to Church, College of Cardinals, those who continue to be priests or indeed his own vocational choice. Bernardin is alluding to what Evelyn and James Whitehead call mature use of "power against". They note that conflict, struggle or combative power are not necessarily destructive when someone finds their strength or intellectual position challenged and "to be sure, the game can degenerate into a struggle to win at whatever price, but it need not do so" (1984, 158). Furthermore,

> this powerful part of life 'up close' can be harnessed in a way that turns its energy to good use, redistributing power among us, revitalising our commitment to one another, suggesting fresh alternatives for the future (159).[56]

One of the modes of struggle is theological reflection. It hardly matters whether these resigned priests are hapless victims of change or angry protagonists who seek to bring about change. This is Church being Church as long as there is reflection and dialogue.

Michael and Deborah Jinkins' research on the "Cure of Souls" through the process of change caused them to abandon their original plan. Instead of using the disciplines of sociology, psychology and educational theory, they filtered these disciplines through the lens of practical theology and theological reflection.

> The instruments in the Appendix are designed to assist the pastor in ... listening and looking in a way that taps cognitive, rational, intuitive, emotional and affectional aspects of the personality. We have begun in several places to develop some theological reflections that we hope the pastor will continue to work through (1991, viii).

The following section focuses on the contribution of theological reflection to the dynamics of transition.

1.2.6 Theological reflection: a bridge through change

In 1991 the Whiteheads incorporated in a new book, six journal articles written from 1987–1990 on the themes of spirituality for ministry, formation, the partnership in ministry of ordained and non-ordained, and theological reflection.[57] The synthesis of commentary and analysis of trends combined with a theologically reflective methodology to provide a template for practitioners of collaborative ministry. As shifting paradigms of ministry prompted responses of fear, anxiety, and confusion, the Whiteheads offered relational and dialogical criteria that complement and explicate Sofield and Juliano's theory of transition. They suggested that, ideally, the link between the discernment of emerging themes and obedience to insights from Scripture and tradition is composed of four elements of reflection on what is "new" or "different" (1991, 201–204):

- Ignorance (unexplored territory) provides "a fruitful kind of absence," that makes us teachable, alerts us to the stirring of God and directs our attention to what is new, different or emerging (1991, 202).[58]
- Community, into which the "public" nature of discernment invites us, is where "there are no secret arrangements, no confidential deals" and authorities "also obey the process; they are not exempt from it, nor can they ignore it at their whim" (202–203).
- Negotiation "is the crux of any method of reflection." We stay committed to the process, reject the manipulation and coercion that "blocks our ears from hearing God's call," and learn to deal with the inevitable conflict that comes from "differences of opinion, disagreement and challenge" (203).[59]

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[56] The Whiteheads outline an adult use of power *on*, *over*, *for*, *with*, and *against* that is essential for effective dialogue and collaboration and, I would argue, successful transition into stage four (1984, 151–165). The issue is not just how to manage change but how to manage oneself through change.

[57] The Whiteheads offer an important contribution to the development of theological reflection during these significant years. Their bibliography witnesses to a wide cross-section of research on the spirituality of collaborative ministry. The journals included: Studies in Formative Spirituality; Spirituality Today; New Theological Review; Review for Religious; Church; Chicago Studies.

[58] Graham also affirms a postmodern spirit of bricolage or pastiche where fragments and isolated pieces become free from any dominating theory in order to develop new, but fragile and provisional knowledge (1996; 2000, 104–117).

[59] Sofield and Juliano build upon the developmental theory of Erik Erikson (1963). They highlight the need for personal integration within priests and lay pastoral leaders. Until pastoral leaders begin the

- Reconciliation must follow struggle because we cannot avoid hurting others. Paternalism and rebellion duel together, fear and anxiety create bruising scenarios and all decisions involve grieving because the dreams and hopes of some will have been lost. "We need time and prayer to heal the bruises that our wrestling has caused" (204).[60]

The first element is essential for dialogue to commence with a sense of questioning. The second element is essential for healthy community to emerge. The third element is essential for community to grow in a nurturing climate. The fourth element is essential for community to be sustained. All of these elements appeared to some degree in Aspendale and provided an open environment of conversation and a context that provided strong ties to the current discussion of practical theology as public theology. Graham suggests that

> the key hermeneutical criterion for a reconstructed Christian practice is the 'disclosure' of *alterity*. In practical terms, such a perspective would favour strategies which encourage empathy and solidarity with others, open up enlarged horizons of understanding and commitment, and foster pastoral encounters which engender new perspectives on human experience and Divine reality (2000, 106).

Relational words such as "empathy" and "solidarity", "pastoral encounters" and "human experience" create a clear setting for mutuality in the struggle of change and for dialogue as theological reflection. Mutuality between the pastoral leader, visiting priests and parishioners was a key category in the study.

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journey of working on the integration of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, generativity, identity and intimacy, then there is little ability to negotiate successfully (1987, 47–55).

[60] Gerald Arbuckle uses cultural anthropology to evaluate strategic pastoral issues within organisations and to consider how institutions can reclaim themselves in the midst of chaos and change. Individuals and organisations need to learn to grieve the loss of secure patterns as they experience anxiety, confusion and pain. He blends biblical insights with current grief and organisational theory to suggest a spirituality of "letting go for refounding" (2000, 305-341). Scripture, theology, experience, grief theory, and the culture of organisations sustain a reflective theology. Donal O'Leary stresses that "mourning is not sadness ... we need to grieve and ... mourn the shadow that has fallen across our individual dioceses and across the Western Church." All of the faithful must prepare for "painful change; to learn to take risks again rather than be always playing it safe" (2005, 225–226).

1.2.7 Dialogue: a bridge to community

Within the Church where metaphors of family and relationship express the nature of its being, dialogue is essential to morale, purpose and vision. Relational and ethical dialogue stimulates

> a practical theology with an emphasis on relevance, reason and relationship ... Practical theology itself exists as part of the web of relationships which form, to draw on Stackhouse (2004) again, a 'comprehending civil society' (Graham and Rowlands 2005, 7).

If "relevance, reason and relationship" are valued, then the meaning and experience of Father (or Holy Father), Brother or Sister, and People of God must express these values in dialogue, both direct and reflective. Theological reflection and formation are elements of ministry that must be modelled and encouraged and Canons 229 and 231.1 prescribe this. The canonical right of lay leaders to a climate encouraging theological education and ministry formation can be threatened by a fearful stage 3-4 response. Canon 229 describes the rights and duties of all Christians. It refers to the knowledge and **integration in life** ("so that they may be able to live according to this teaching" 229.1) of Christian teaching to a point where they can proclaim and defend it. Undergirded by this learning, they have to exercise their apostolate. The canon describes a traditional understanding of theological reflection and formation for lay faithful. This is different in emphasis to canon 231.1 where

> lay people who are pledged to the special service of the Church, whether permanently or for a time, have a duty to acquire the appropriate formation which their role demands, so that they may conscientiously, earnestly and diligently fulfil this role.

This is precisely what formation for specific ministry and theological reflection imply. Groome's concept of "shared praxis" (1980, 135–232) integrated theory and practice with community dialogue and reflection.[61] He also rejected the idea that somehow theology and theological education would "trickle down" from top to bottom or from those who are theologically educated to those who are not (1987, 57). As relationships

at Aspendale illustrated, in contrast with relationships within the archdiocese, a shared praxis approach is essential for stage 3-4 transition. It offers an alternative to "monological models of practical thinking" and a development of "critical shared reflection on present shared practices that make this dialogue an intentional educational process" (Browning 1991, 218). The following components of theological reflection are founded upon the Christian story and the pivotal, catechetical mode is dialogue.

> Dialogue is necessary for building Christian community within the group ... Only in the dialogue of what Buber calls an I/You relationship is it possible for us to form human community, and Christian community requires no less.[62] Dialogue is especially necessary in a religious education context using a shared praxis approach because the dialogue of participants is an essential part of the catechesis (Groome 1980, 188–189).

Pastoral experience illustrates that this principle works at a micro and macro level, with individuals or corporate structures. At a micro or individual level, Barbara Weiskrantz expresses the sense of community and mutuality that also pays attention to, and respects, professional boundaries. This resonates with pastoral ministry where mutuality or journeying together with appropriate safeguards is the most relevant model.

> Seeing and accepting my own neediness and pain as arising from the depth of the human condition allows me to be alongside my clients, assuming their frame of reference, as they learn to accept *their* neediness and pain. This is a prelude to establishing an I-Thou relationship in which, however careful I may be about not revealing personal facts, still I try to turn towards the other with my whole being (2003, 45).

Parishioners affirmed the Aspendale leader for "turning towards the other" with his whole being and his authority was based on listening skills and relevant ministry. At a macro level the Catholic Church in the time leading up to the Aspendale project faced a number of issues emerging from collaborative ministry. Authority became a critical factor. The task of becoming community must permeate, inform and humanise authority and must also permeate the choice of modes of learning or catechesis. "The faith life of

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[61] The Whiteheads also emphasise community and the "sense of the faithful" (1980; 1992, 91–100; 1995). Kinast describes their method as paying attention to "concrete events in particular communities of faith rather than generic human experiences" (2000, 10).

[62] Groome values relationships that express in theory and practice Martin Buber's belief that "man (sic) becomes an 'I' through a 'you'" (1970, 80). Respect and mutuality should be especially evident in Christian community. The teaching and modelling (catechesis) component of dialogue is important for Groome.

the people must be informed by the reflection, research and systematic investigation of the theological and biblical community" (Groome 1980, 200). Groome affirms a teaching and learning church as depicted by Vatican II.

> The *ecclesia docens* is also the *ecclesia discens*. ... We must deny the extreme conservative understanding that one small group (the hierarchy) teaches and the faithful only learn while the theologians prove that the official teaching already given is correct (what Dulles calls "regressive theology" (1980, 199–200).

The dynamics behind Dulles' "regressive theology" have their origins in a distortion of authority. Jinkins and Jinkins use case study methodology to outline the difference between power and authority (1991, 27–38). The classification of Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard complements the Whiteheads' (1995b, 149–162) understanding of power. According to Hersey and Blanchard:

- *coercive* power is based on fear;
- *legitimate* power is based on the leader's position, role and commissioned status;
- *expert* power is based on respectful recognition and respect for the leader's knowledge or expertise;
- *reward* power is based on the leader's capacity to confer rewards for performance;
- *referent* power is based on the leader's character, ethos and personality;
- *information* power is based on the leader's access to information that others need;
- *connection* power is based on the leader's relationships with people of influence (1982, 178–179).

While there is obviously some overlap, the Whiteheads' model emphasises the relational, one-to-one characteristics of power. Hersey and Blanchard describe the systemic or structural aspects of power and the potential influence upon relationships. They also describe the impact on those with "high maturity" (who take responsibility for directing their own behaviour), and those with "low maturity" (who do not take responsibility for directing their own behaviour). Those with low maturity are more likely to respond to "coercive", "connection" and "reward" power. The combination of the two templates helps to interpret the level and authenticity of dialogue and also to define the nature of community and power in conjunction with the dynamics of hierarchy and power. Within my own tradition which has no Magisterium, we work on

the principle that teaching will come from a "consensus of consecrated Christian scholarship" (Williams 1957, 71–74).[63] This is an ecumenical and Catholic perspective that I am familiar with and it can be aligned with the role of the Magisterium for the Catholic Church. This is where the "praxis of the people is informed by the consensus of belief and practice taught by the official Magisterium" (Groome 1980, 200). There are three partners or sources if authority and dialogue are to work successfully:

- The praxis of the whole people of God;
- The consensus of belief and practice that emerges through theologians;
- The official Magisterium.

What is the relationship between these three elements? As the Aspendale project concluded, Australian bishop John Heaps states that there is "a fear seemingly present in Rome now which cannot listen openly to challenge, criticism or opposing views of loyal and devoted members of the Church" (1998, 37). Heaps also laments the inability of the Magisterium to "tap the wisdom, knowledge and holiness of the whole body of Christ" in order to "have a moral theology" and "a more spiritual Church, a Church which on every level is doing the things Jesus was sent to do" (37–38). This plea returns us to Graham's call for a practical/public theology where "relevance, reason and relationship" provide a benchmark for dialogue (2005, 7). It also echoes the voice of Vatican II. Congar's history of ecclesiology was one of the theoretical pillars of Vatican II. A decade later he was challenged by the debate over the relationship of theologians to the authority of the Magisterium. He rejected any suggestion of an exclusive right for either and included a third partner (the praxis of the people) in the dialogue. He recognised that the special charism of theologians should be affirmed but their work should be carried out responsibly in communion with,

> the concrete lives of the faithful ... in an atmosphere of mutual criticism. Theologians should not be regarded only from the point of view of their dependence on the Magisterium. Rather one must put truth, the apostolic faith which has been handed down, confessed, preached and celebrated, at the top. And under it, at its service, we must place the Magisterium of apostolic ministry and the research and teaching of theologians, together with the belief of the

[63] Williams looked for "a consensus of judgment among Christians down through the Christian era and a consensus of judgment among Christians. This is not a popular mind, but the mind of consecrated, qualified scholarship" (72).

faithful. In this way the differentiated, organically articulated work of the Magisterium and theologians reflects the life of the church (1977, 20).

Current practice in many seminaries reflects and develops Congar's point. The *Seminary Journal* reprinted an address by Formation Director Paul Ritt to his peers. Ritt asserted that our "seminarians need to work with and learn from the lay faithful in their pastoral formation ... Tools like required seminar/workshops on ... case studies and theological reflection exercises - well into the priesthood - can be good resources." He suggested that with "the advent of the Internet and the proliferation of magisterial teaching and theological research in recent years" there was now a great opportunity to add depth and pastoral content to intellectual development (2004, 100). This threefold benchmark for dialogue is a key component of healthy stage 3-4 transition.

1.2.8 A case study in communication

One of the goals of this study was to explore the culture and environment that influenced the years of the Aspendale project. In late 1997 the Vatican issued the Instruction *On Certain Questions.* A dramatic headline appeared in *The Tablet* of November 22 that expressed the general feeling towards the Instruction: "Furore over Vatican's move to rein in the laity" (1514). Several weeks earlier, it had been reported in *The Tablet* of November 1 that the bishops of England and Wales "were perplexed" to hear on their *ad limina* visit to Rome that a document on lay ministry was being prepared. This was a justifiable response given that in 1995 they had released *The Sign We Give*, their most recent comprehensive research on the same topic (1413).[64] There had been no consultation with the English and Welsh bishops. Is this an example of Dulles' "regressive theology" (an institutionally dependent model of learning) combined with Hershey and Blanchard's "low maturity" (coercive, connection and reward power) model of interaction?

In the early 80s Karl Rahner had provided an illuminating commentary on the historical role and Church's experience of the Magisterium. His article appeared in the

[64] *The Sign We Give* demonstrated a strong commitment to listening carefully to priests and laity and encouraged dialogue at all levels of decision-making. It is one of the documents used in this study.

Tablet as a contribution to the ecumenical quest for unity of all Christians. His final sentence identifies a lack of dialogue, mutuality and community within his own church.

> The ordinary Magisterium of the Pope in authentic doctrinal decisions, at least in the past and up to very recent times, was often involved in error and ... Rome was accustomed to put forward and insist on such decisions as if there could be no doubt about their ultimate correctness and as if any further discussion of them was unbecoming for a Catholic theologian (1981, 53).[65]

If bishops at the highest level are not consulted how will the Magisterium include Congar's "research and teaching of theologians, together with the belief of the faithful" (1977, 20)? *On Certain Questions* appeared at a critical stage in the development of the Aspendale Project following a change in Archbishop (late 1996) that had already signalled changes of ethos and theological priorities. Almost half-way through the experiment the new Archbishop revised the original *Tomorrow's Church* process and *The Priests Deployment Committee - Draft Report* of January 1998 affirmed all the previous work as "foundational" but with one difference. A footnote indicated that

> the only exception was the exclusion from consideration of the Pastoral Leader Model proposed in the *Tomorrow's Church Report.* The Archbishop indicated that he wished there to be priestly leadership in all parish structures (1998, 3).[66]

The elimination of the Pastoral Leader Model, the second favourite option (only by a narrow margin) that had emerged after extensive consultation a year earlier, had significant repercussions for this study. When I inquired about introducing the Aspendale data into the new discussions I was advised by diocesan representatives to put everything on the "back burner" because the model was not a continuing option. It matters little if a particular model is not considered effective or not seen as a viable option. What mattered was that the process of consultation had been dislocated and thus compromised, and there was no way of responding to the large group of Catholics who selected the option. The model and the data simply disappeared. No commentary or reflection went towards new praxis or effective stage 3–4 transition. The manner of

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[65] Heaps comments that the Magisterium "does not possess a great record for reliability when it enters into matters of natural or human science. Its teachings on marriage and sexual ethics have been abysmal" (1998, 37–38). Such perceptions do not encourage trust, an essential aspect of dialogue.

[66] The Aspendale model assumed that a Priest-Supervisor (conforming to canons 528, 529 and 530) would be appointed (1994, 25).

dialogue and consultation was the same as with *On Certain Questions*. Brian Gleeson notes the letter in the Tablet of 21 September 2002 from R.B. of New South Wales. He quotes that it is "not unknown for a newly appointed parish priest to feel that it is his decision alone to undo the accepted practices of that community ... and there seems to be no redress" (2005, 8). The mode of communication of the Instruction, the lack of consultation on the elimination of a model of ministry in Melbourne and the experience of R.B. seem to deliver the same pulse reading at Vatican, diocesan and parish level. Gleeson's goal is to return the exercise of authority back to where it is meant to belong,

> and where it did once belong ... within the communion of a collegial Church, a Church in which many persons participate or are meant to participate, in different but related roles, in the life, leadership and decision-making of the Church. This Church is as much their Church as that of anyone else, even the Pope (2005, 8).

Gleeson quotes from an interview on *Papal Primacy and Decentralisation* with Cardinal Godfried Daneels. The topic is ineffective dialogue between Roman authorities and bishops and, from the top down, a good example is not being set. Daneels affirmed an ecclesiology of the local Church and the need for effective dialogue, stating that he favoured

> intermediate bodies that are able to facilitate and improve the workings of the Church, but not structures of authority ... I am of the opinion that we should arrive at a certain consensus. And when this does not exist, I prefer that we wait and search again for a solution ... When no consensus is reached on a problem, we must continue to discuss it and study it more thoroughly (1997, 580).[67]

The Instruction and similar modes of communication were experienced in a variety of forums as an inhibitor to open and reasoned theological reflection, thus potentially preventing effective stage 3-4 transition. The process of the *Priests Deployment Committee* initiated by the new Archbishop effectively reversed the two recommendations:

A. The Parish Partnership Model;

B. The Pastoral Leader Model (1994, 23–25).

In the first model two parishes formed a mission partnership, a priest was appointed to both and each parish had a Pastoral Associate. The *Priests Deployment*

Committee made scant mention of Pastoral Associates as a supportive or complementary strategy for priests in parish partnerships. "Parish amalgamation" following a merger and "parish partnership" between two parishes were presented as priest-only options. "Parish clustering" assumed Pastoral Associates were in the leadership mix but disappeared as a vital area of inquiry and dialogue. 19,431 people responded to the question on laity taking on more pastoral leadership roles. Only twenty percent responded negatively to this (1998, 44). Parishioners affirmed the centrality of the priest in parish life but over sixty percent "felt confident that they could continue well without a resident priest." Seventy percent felt that they "would do so by parishioners taking on more responsibility for parish activities" (11). They also expressed concern about the limited lay leadership options given a general willingness to explore lay ministry. They wondered whether the "consultation will be heeded and whether the *Tomorrow's Church* report is still being utilised in planning" (12). The priests' responses mirrored this level of anxiety over inadequate, stop-start consultation. They called for better change management during parish transitions, broader vision and planning and changes in the criteria for ordination. The limited, priest-oriented options that preserved the status quo were perceived to ignore the much wider undercurrent of feeling and opinion.[68] It can be inferred that when the leadership of the Church has an agenda that does not fit with the feelings and insights of the members of the church then the latter will not be heard or engaged in reflection. Groome contends that the "praxis of the people is informed by the consensus of belief and practice taught by the official Magisterium" (1980, 200).

1.2.9 An interesting postscript

Eight years later, on 11 October 2005, the Melbourne Senate of Priests circulated a paper introducing new initiatives for efficient use of parish (priest) resources. Focus groups were used "as a cost-effective and timely way of gathering views without requiring all parishes to undertake the task of preparing commentary" (2005, 5). The reaction from regional deaneries repeats the responses to the *Priests Deployment Committee* of 1998. "Anecdotal feedback indicates a **real measure of resistance** (my emphasis) to a full-scale consultation based on dissatisfaction with the outcomes of

[67] This first appeared in *Il Regno*, April 15 1997. (Trans. October 30, 1997 in *Origins* 20, no. 30: 339–341.

similar past initiatives" (5, f/n 8). The *Tomorrow's Church* process implemented wide consultation that the new Archbishop either reversed or modified following surveys with a fifteen percent response rate from parishioners and a sixty-two percent rate from priests (1998, 39). These priest-focused deliberations noted the many dissenting voices, and repeated requests for a balancing focus on lay leadership, but the culture and agenda had been reversed. The outcome is, I believe, the current "real measure of resistance" because of previous patterns of inadequate dialogue.[69] Shared praxis based on dialogue is necessary for the Church to transition to Sofield and Juliano's fourth stage. It was not happening in post-*On Certain Questions*, late 1990s Melbourne. The following questions were still relevant and became a part of the research in Aspendale:

- How should Groome's model of dialogue be enacted at the diocesan level?
- Where are the three partners or sources required for effective dialogue?
- How does the praxis of the people of God, informed by the consensus of belief and practice from theologians, engage the Magisterium?

1.3 Collecting the data

What follows is a simple description of the practical and structural aspects of data collection with additional comments on the role of the researcher. Chapter 3 will outline an extensive methodological and validity rationale for the activities described below, so this part of the report includes only brief references describing the techniques. The change of policy within the Archdiocese led to a much tighter field-based research for the first eighteen months that focused on (i) the parish leader; (ii) the parishioners and (iii) strategic documents ("textual data") illustrating and clarifying parish life (Grbich 1999, 10; Yin 2003, 85–89).[70] Research within the parish school was set up as a form of data source triangulation to complement data from those who were directly involved in the parish community. Supplementary data (questionnaire and on-site discussion) was collected from fifteen teachers at the parish school. Themes were found to be consistent with those of the parishioners and used as a modified form of "data

[68] Twenty five percent of parishioners requested discussion on married priests. Nothing happened.
[69] Aspendale declined to be a part of the 1997 survey in protest at the inadequate consultation.
[70] The original scope of the research planned to incorporate interviews with the Archbishop, two bishops, members of three diocesan pastoral planning groups, several pastoral associates and local priests. The

source triangulation" to check that what I was "observing and reporting carried the same meaning when found under different circumstances" (Stake 1995, 113). "Different circumstances" meant that these participants were, for the most part:

- not parish members,
- professional peers,
- paid staff, not voluntary,
- not part of the worshipping community
- and subject to different accountability structures such as government regulations.

1.3.1 Library-based research

Analysis of this data identified emergent categories and properties (Glaser 1998; Grbich 1999) which then stimulated the extensive library-based research and document study that became a critical and constant "background resource" (Walker 1985, 13). This ongoing literature review (Chapter 4 *Locating the Aspendale Story*) served as an extension of the original literature review in Chapter 1 and helped to develop theory rather than simply acting as the starting point for the research design. Another complementary source of data was the roster of priests who, as theologically and pastorally trained co-observers, provided an invaluable source of "theory triangulation" that supported and directed (redirected at times) the literature review (Denzin 1989).

By the end of the third year, thirty-five priests had assisted with Masses, some more than six times. Encounters and conversations with visiting priests provided theory triangulation. The concept of formal interviews was replaced by contact after Mass, debriefing after parish planning conferences, and discussion of various books or Vatican documents. I considered these priests to be co-observers or co-reflectors who, like myself, were involved in ministry outside the parish. As I discussed emerging themes, I found that to the "extent they agree[d] on its meaning, the interpretation is triangulated" (Stake 1995, 113) and ready to be fully triangulated through "member checking" (115–116) with respondents and through the extensive literature review that was unfolding. Where we could not agree on meaning, I invited priests to suggest books,

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elimination of the model by the new Archbishop indicated a narrower focus as a part of the "put it on the

research or documents I could read. These priests were a major resource for the literature review and theological reflection, passing on numerous articles, documents and books. Library-based research continued as a major focus until the end of the project.

1.3.2 Understanding the parish

Preparation for my cultural and contextual orientation involved a period of time dedicated to participant-observation which is descried as an opportunity to "gain access to events or groups ... [and] to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone 'inside' the case study rather than external to it" (Yin 2003, 94). Systematic data collection therefore happened within a framework of participant observation that invited the whole parish to be partners in the research (Whyte 1991; Robson 1993, 194–205).[71] Yin states that many "have argued that such a perspective is invaluable in producing an accurate portrayal of a case study phenomenon" (2003, 94). The following checklist that I sent to the parish administration illustrates the high degree of cooperation I received as I prepared for the questionnaire phase with parishioners.[72]

> Issues to discuss with the parish leader and team as I prepare for group interviews:
> (i) Access to office and some copying on the run. Phone?
> (ii) Which groups would they suggest that I visit for a part of their meeting? Can I write to them first? I need a current list of contacts if it is different to the general directory. I will seek permission to attend a regular meeting and ask for about 30 minutes to check emergent themes and possible questions. It is not a focus group per se but a discussion time in the midst of their usual business. Check the number of consent forms required.
> (iii) Will it be possible to seek a brief time with random parishioners after a communion service during the week? Conversation only.
> (iv) Check use of the meeting room for gathering the people I have already who are willing to participate.

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back burner" policy. It seemed advisable for the researcher to remain somewhat invisible.

[71] The following advice was given to the parish council and parishioners and printed in the Newsletter. "The study is being conducted by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. Given the reality of the shortage of priests where it is anticipated that by the year 2010 approximately 80 parishes will not have a resident priest, the intention is to evaluate new models of leadership. Your Parish elected to appoint a Lay Pastoral Leader, initially for three years. Because of the complex nature of the relationship between Priest and Parish, it is important that the changes are handled with sensitivity and care. The development of the model of Lay Pastoral Leader has to be evaluated. This study will hopefully lead to creative and careful options for ministry. Through this project, participants will have the opportunity to contribute to a positive response to a difficult pastoral dilemma for the Catholic Church in Melbourne."

[72] A similar process was used to gather focus groups to check tentative and emerging categories (Grbich 1999, 404) after analysing individual questionnaires.

During the first year of the project I visited the parish almost every week and had free access to all activities. Each visit focused on a specific event or appointment such as a Sunday Mass, an interview with the parish leader, the observation of a school para-liturgy, a weekday communion service, an administration meeting or the observation of a St Vincent de Paul meeting. The purpose was to:

- become familiar with the culture and ethos of the parish;
- note responses to the new ministry model;
- observe and engage the parish leader in a variety of ministry contexts;
- develop questions based on emerging categories for semi–structured interviews with the parish leader;
- design the questionnaire for use with parishioners at the end of the first year.

Because I did not come from a Catholic tradition, this was for me a particularly valuable time. Stake explains it well:

> [o]bservations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case. Refining the plan of observation is directed by [the research issue]. We need observations pertinent to our issues ... We choose opportunities identified partly by issues, helping us to make better acquaintance with the case (Stake, 1995, 60).

While Stake agrees that hypotheses and goal statements can sharpen the focus, he feels this can also limit the depth of observation by minimising the interest in the situation and circumstance. "I choose to use *issues* as conceptual structure - and '*issue* questions' as my primary research questions - in order to force attention to complexity and contextuality" (16).

This was my approach as I sought to identify what issues were important for the parish and what themes could direct the literature review. Accurate questions for interviews and questionnaires come only from "spending time in an environment observing behaviour, action and interaction ... [in order to] understand the meanings constructed in that environment and [to] make sense of everyday life experiences" (Grbich 1999, 123–124). The research questions often revolved around full-time lay pastoral leadership, the accompanying theme of ordained/non-ordained, and adjustment

to the transition by all parties. The questions that developed were validated by engagement with parish personnel. Parishioners and the pastoral leader checked the draft questionnaire to make sure it covered relevant issues and that it was not just my conceptual/ theoretical explanations of what I was observing. It was a modified Canadian instrument, so it was important to make sure it was not forced to fit Aspendale.[73]

Given that in this form of inquiry the researcher *is* the research instrument (Lincoln and Guba 1985), the initial data are the observations of the researcher and need to be validated. Participant observation allows the researcher to be flexible and adapt to, or follow up, events as they happen. *First-order* data were gathered as they were being generated as, for example, in the case of observation of the discussion of the problem of maintaining the priest-roster. *Second-order* data came from subsequent contact or conversations that essentially capture the reconstructed accounts and associated reflections. In those engagements I introduced questions built on issues that had emerged from observation. *First-order* data therefore formed a reciprocal relationship with *second-order* data. *Third-order* data "comprise textual recordings or material culture from the past or the present" (Grbich 1999, 124).[74] This flexibility and reciprocity "helps to explain why many case studies have some form of participant-observation as the primary method of data collection" (Robson 1993, 195). As Robson indicates, the creative flow of analysis

> takes place in the middle of data collection and is used to help shape its development ... Participant-observers can either seek to hide the fact they are carrying out this form of inquiry, or make it clear from the start what their purpose is ... (195–196).

[73] See Appendix 2 for a copy of the ethics clearance pro forma that gave participants control over their contribution. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.

[74] Mundane files (Lofland and Lofland 1984) for third-order data contained four years of newsletters, minutes, copies of liturgies, and the occasional letter of complaint from the Cathedral. The shift in the focus following the "back-burner" incident meant this data simply provided a historical backdrop for themes and issues.

1.3.3 The lay parish leader[75]

I adopted DeVault's power-levelling approach in which the researcher seeks to build "more from what we share with respondents ... than from disciplinary categories that we bring to research encounters" (1999, 65).[76] Taylor's congregational research prompted him to ask an ethical question: "How do we tell the stories of the critical praxis of the church in a way that gives dignity to those who have entertained us" (2003, 16)? A reciprocal relationship is therefore developed between data collection and analysis. The form this took in Aspendale is aptly described by Stake as

> [c]ollaborative discussions or hermeneutic conversations on the themes and thematic descriptions of phenomena ... what one seeks in a conversational relation with others is a common orientation to the notion or the phenomenon that one is studying (Stake 1990, 100).

Hermeneutic conversations with the pastoral leader focused my questions even as the issues were taking me back into the library to find more wide-ranging conversation partners. My reflections and tentative apprehension of issues also became more grounded through conversation with other respondents. This egalitarian principle is important in practical theology where "conversation is a game with some hard rules" (Tracy 1987, 19). Veling clarifies this by stating that "mutually productive conversation involves the ability to both influence and be influenced" (1995, 69). Consequently, semi-structured interviews developed from observation and conversation and took the form of a "list of topic headings and possible key questions" supported by a "set of associated prompts" (Robson 1993, 238). The following set of questions illustrates a mixture of general and specific topics that had developed and were explored in early interviews with the parish leader.

1. Can you describe the historical factors that led to the Aspendale Project and any tensions or expectations this may have created?
2. Describe the theological and logistical aspects of the model as you experience them.

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[75] While the pastoral leader was an obvious person of interest, he was also a "data rich" respondent. It is normal in case studies that some are selected for their ability to articulate experience and issues (Stake, 1995, 65, f/n 5). The pastoral leader also had degrees in theology and psychology and many years of experience in leadership positions.

[76] Lacking a Catholic background I found it easy to ask respondents, priests or parents in the school: "What does this mean?" It took two weeks to stop saying Communion when I meant Eucharist.

3. What are the leadership issues for you? Prompt: Comment on acceptance of your leadership of funerals, weddings, baptisms and other 'hands-on' pastoral tasks.
4. What is your response to the practical solution provided by an extensive roster of priests to preside at the Eucharist and deliver the homily? Prompt: What are the issues for (i) the lay leader; (ii) the community; (iii) the priests and, (iv) the wider Church?

Previous formal encounters with the pastoral leader (three and five months into the project) had provided the basis for these questions. Ongoing conversation regarding strategic planning or pastoral events focused on member checking these emerging themes with the parish leader (Robson 2003, 233–243; Grbich 1999, 94–101). The pastoral leader was a natural theological reflector who explored feelings, experience, tradition and Scripture within a community perspective (Groome 1980; Whitehead and Whitehead 1980; 1995), so the idea of formal interviews became restrictive and unnecessary. I simply noted the content of conversations and levels of emotional engagement and kept the themes running through any subsequent formal, recorded encounters. The following key themes come from the summaries of encounters with the pastoral leader:

- Loyalty to the Catholic Church is held in tension with the ability to analyse and critique meta–narratives.
- His own story has become a part of the unfolding drama. His call and vocation are in tension with his ability to self-critique.
- Pain and grief surfaces when marriage and family are coping with a new paradigm. Self-care, peer debriefing and the marginalising nature of Church politics are key issues.
- Roles are held in tension - pastoral leader, liturgical leader, homilist, and evangelist. Is this simply the normal tension of a minister in a local parish?
- Is the servant role of leader at odds with the entrepreneurial skills required for building a community in mission?

The most effective way to determine phenomenological meaning was to develop questions and explore themes thus generating first and second order data that served as a form of simultaneous dialogue and member-checking. Mager cautions that practical theology "still relies heavily upon a more theoretical approach to truth, as a matter of contemplation (or theoretical reflection) while the Bible tends to envision truth as something to be 'done' (John 3:21)" (2005, 194).

> It would be simplistic, however, to think of themes as conceptual formulations or categorical statements. After all it is lived experience that we are attempting to describe, and lived experience cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions (van Manen 1990, 79).

Exploration of lived experience teaches the researcher to listen to the stories or anecdotes that action produces and then integrate them with emerging theory.

> Anecdotes express a certain disdain for the alienated and alienating discourse of scholars who have difficulty showing how life and theoretical propositions are connected ... Anecdotes may be encountered as concrete demonstrations of wisdom, sensitive insight, and proverbial truth" (van Manen 1990, 119–120).

1.3.4 The researcher

(Writing in the present tense). I describe my role as that of an empathic outsider. I am an ordained minister of the Churches of Christ in Australia, a Protestant movement. My childhood experience was within the Catholic wing of the Anglican Church. My teaching within the Melbourne College of Divinity is in an ecumenical environment that includes seminarians. My experience of the Roman Catholic tradition also includes organisation of jointly-sponsored pastoral care programs. I normally use Catholic facilities for retreats and sabbaticals. My journal notes indicate that I used Stake's questions to interpret my role as an empathic outsider (1995, 103). My conclusions and observations are in brackets.

- How much should I participate in the activity of the case? (The more I participated the more invisible I became as a researcher).
- How much comprehension of knowledge should I reveal? (Growth in knowledge and understanding became a point of credibility and, following Grbich (1999, 56), I also asked to be corrected when I misread Catholic culture and mores. Researchers with feminist perspectives such as Carolyn Ellis and Michael Flaherty (1992) argue that sharing power and knowledge can equalise relationships and minimise difference).
- Should I be a neutral observer or evaluative, critical analyst? (The former was not possible. I chose to work with pastoral skills and validity checks to enable accuracy).
- How much should I provide interpretations about the case? (I used my normal pastoral approach of interpathy (Augsberger 1986; Lartey 1997) and bracketing

(Whitehead and Whitehead 1995), as a reflective discipline. I also enlisted the support of respondents in formulating questions based on interpretation. The literature review gave me confidence in offering interpretation).

My role as empathic outsider meant that I not only observed, I was emotionally connected. My presence in the office when the constant headache of maintaining the roster of priests was being discussed meant that I both observed and felt the extreme anxiety of last minute phone calls and the wry humour of "priests dropping in like meteorites from outer space." These experiences became a natural point of inquiry and "provided powerful stories to illustrate particular contexts" (Grbich 1999, 190). Elements of participant observation where the "investigator takes on a role other than that of passive observer" (Robson 1993, 159) led me to prompt two priests to join the roster. At times I felt like an advocate for the parish and had to be conscious of transference issues (Kennedy and Charles 1990, 79–82; Geldard and Geldard 2001, 185–186). The resolution for me was found in the pastoral paradigm for my ministry. This had moved from relational humanness to relational justice, where training in counselling skills had enabled me to know the difference both as a pastor and as a practical theologian.

Bonnie Miller-McLemore clarifies the shift from a model of pastoral care that pays attention to the "living human document" to a model that explores the "living human web" (1993, 366–369). Larry Kent Graham's psycho-systemic approach to pastoral care and counselling (1992) reaffirmed for me that relational justice as a criterion of care included research relationships, especially where the model is one of case study/participant-observation. Researchers can thus be healthy participants in processes that promote "self-determination and fulfilment, full participation in the social order, and nurture of individuals and cultural groups" (Graham 1995, 231). The contentious issue of the homily and the limitations for the pastoral leader arose often in the data, particularly after *On Certain Questions* appeared (Article 3, n. 1) and when the new Archbishop received several letters with complaints on liturgical matters from one or two parishioners and lay visitors. It was not uncommon for the visiting priest to read the Gospel, offer a brief overview of the text and then ask the pastoral leader to give a reflection as the one who had most pastoral contact. At one point I was invited to give a

brief reflection ('homily') on the theological and spiritual purpose of the research. This generated more discussion and also the development of one of the interview questions.[77] This level of engagement led to much reflection on my part to ensure that the research was conducted in a transparent way. At all times the literature review continued to develop as an adjunct conversation. I concluded that the concept of subjects as partners in the research became a reality that suited:

- the case study;
- the participant-observer approach;
- the role and faith-identity of the investigator and the subjects;
- the level of theological awareness of all parties.

The codes, categories and properties that emerged from the pastoral leader data were based on a basic pattern of semi-structured interviews, notes of ad hoc topical conversations, and records of discussions on specific issues. The additional concept of mutuality suited the context and I discovered that the role of participant-observer was one of listener, advocate, evaluator, biographer and interpreter (Stake 1995, 93–98).

> (The inquirer/respondent relationship) ... is one of mutual and simultaneous influence. The interactive nature of the relationship is prized, since it is only because of this feature that inquirers and respondents may fruitfully learn together. The relationship ... when properly established is one of respectful negotiation, joint control and reciprocal learning (Williams 1986, 70).

These relational dynamics were also an important part of the data gathering process with the parishioners.

1.3.5 Parishioners

The first major survey of parishioner responses was introduced at the end of the first year of the project. A questionnaire/appraisal for priests developed in Canada was being modified for use by lay ecclesial ministers (Bannon 1996).[78] After contact with the Canadian editors and checking with Aspendale respondents, the questionnaire was

[77] What is your response to the practical solution provided by an extensive roster of priests to preside at the Eucharist and deliver the homily? Prompt: What are the issues for (i) the lay leader; (ii) the community; (iii) the priests (iv) and the wider Church?

modified over a period of nine months using insights gathered from attendance at worship, observation of business meetings, interviews and follow-up sessions with the pastoral leader.[79] Some modifications specific to Aspendale were incorporated. The section on homilies was retained, because at that stage, according to first order data, the pastoral leader had been presenting brief reflections that people were experiencing and interpreting as homilies.[80] It was significant that there was very little difference from the questionnaire designed for a priest. The six areas of ministry included liturgy, pastoral care, evangelising, leadership, administration and personal/professional life. A summated rating or Likert scale (1932) was used for each area of ministry. In addition to offering an opportunity for broader comment the scale served to determine general attitude and response to the pastoral leader's ministry and to indicate "internal consistency and/or the ability to differentiate among individuals" (Robson 1993, 260). This scale was used for the following reasons:

- It was expected that degrees of approval or disapproval would be discovered that, at best, would indicate which areas of ministry were not effective or caused conflict.
- While the descriptive paragraphs within the scale were designed to signal the relevant issues in much the same way that a "prompt" acts in an interview (Grbich 1999, 234), they became a stimulus for later discussion.
- It was anticipated that many respondents would merely check the boxes rather than write comments or seek a conversation with the researcher. Almost fifty percent of respondents chose the more expansive option.

Over two hundred and forty questionnaires were circulated. Fifty-one respondents chose to simply use the scale and these were overwhelmingly positive.[81] Forty-eight respondents included written comments on topics. I had one-on-one conversation or follow-up exploration of an issue with thirty-two of these, some several times. Follow-up contacts continued over a period of three months. Some people telephoned to convey responses instead of, or in addition to, the questionnaire. Because

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[78] Bannon, Michael. 1996. Enhancing Your Ministry: A Resource Kit for Priests. Ottawa: Novalis.

[79] See Appendix 1.

[80] Triangulated responses from visiting priests, pastoral leader and parishioners indicated that this reflection was being seen as a 'homily'.

[81] To simplify the analysis I set aside 25 questionnaires that had all positive (6) responses and included the 24 that had variations in response so that the numerical scores could be compared and perhaps highlight areas of interest.

of my presence in the parish I found people sought me out and this led me to drop the focus groups I had planned. This informal mode of contact proved adequate and seemed more natural. It was understood to be confidential, and complemented De Vault's guidelines from feminist research.

> While it is true that the researcher writes up the study and thereby defines the interaction, research participants will exercise agency too, if we let them; they decide whether to talk with us, what to say and how, when to withdraw, and so on. Watching carefully for those decisions and respecting them are large steps toward levelling the power relations of the research encounter (1999, 216).

1.3.6 Conclusion: Data-collection calendar; extract from field notes

The initial phase of first and second-order data collection concluded 15 months into the appointment and prepared the way for the library research. A calendar of this 15 month program appears below. Data collection and analysis took place in a reciprocal way that involved feedback from respondents thus allowing their own "declared values" and "professed meanings" to have an influence on the format (Taylor 2003, 12).[82]

Wednesday 26 November	Parish Assembly. Attended and observed. Introduced survey process.
Thursday 27 November	Met with PL to confirm number. 240+ copies Checked Parish Rolls and areas of ministry.
Thursday 3 December	Distribution and processing.
Wednesday 10th - Thursday 18th December.	Collection and administration of questionnaires. Ad hoc and 'appointment' conversations with parishioners as they wrote extra comments. Time range: 4-21 minutes per person. Recorded my own notes.
Sunday 21 December	Attended Mass again. Collected last questionnaires. Conversations and follow-up appointments.
January	Data analysis. Visits to parish. Checked tentative themes with those who had indicated availability. Phone calls.
February	Data analysis. Visits to parish. Attended groups and events to discuss and check tentative themes. Conversations following mid-week communion services were particularly helpful. Phone calls.
March	"Back-burner" suggestion. Research may not be used. Difficult day. Concluding conversations with respondents.

[82] This is similar to what Nancy Ammerman describes as "native categories" (1998), where the categories that emerge from within a congregation are effectively allowed to interpret their own data.

1.4 Analysis of the data – method and rationale

Every researcher will bring bias to the data, and in qualitative research where "creative ability and theoretical sensitivity" are encouraged (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 94), it is critical to shift smoothly from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis. The following commentary, therefore, intentionally fuses description of methods of data collection with analysis itself. Data collection, analysis and interpretation do not form neatly separated and cohesive categories. No precise point marks where data collection ends and analysis begins, and at times analysis and interpretation cannot be clearly separated (Patton 1987, 144), because, as already noted, in the course of gathering data insights on analysis and interpretation will arise. This overlap can enhance the outcomes as long as initial tentative interpretations do not bias the data. From the perspective of a participant-observer in case study research, the role of the researcher requires clear definition (Whyte 1990).

1.4.1 The analytical task

The final editing for this report involved the compilation of the analysis of the data, ensuring the participants had the final say in response to the literature review. In his review of major cultural themes in the West, John Drane uses the metaphor of the "McDonaldisation of the Church." He shifts the focus of practical theology onto research that concentrates "not so much on the ideological trends that have led to this, but on the human experience of it" (2000, 18). For Taylor the "tension between local as local and local as global" presents the researcher with the threat that "the local [may] disappear into the broad sweep of the global" (2003, 14). In a metaphorical sense the story of the respondents is still being told. Taylor notes that Drane's approach "prioritises individual human experience, while working with the reality of globalisation and a more nuanced understanding of the local" (14–15). The analytical task therefore has been to break apart the data and begin the process of putting the information back together in a relational and cohesive form consistent with other data and true to internal and external validity (Robson 1993, 66–76). Certain factors explain how data

manipulation was undertaken in a valid way both through the extensive literature review and the thick data description (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 97). These factors included:

- Exploration of the causal conditions that led to the phenomenon. (Historical and theological survey.)
- The context, or the particular set of conditions relating to the phenomenon within which the action/interactional strategies were taken. (Post-Vatican II themes and the shortage of priests in Melbourne.)
- The intervening conditions, that is, those events of time, culture and history that facilitated or constrained the process. (The change of Archbishop; The Instruction *On Certain Questions*.)

The following descriptive and interpretative model then became the pattern for analysis:

- *causal conditions* - led to the
- *phenomenon* - which took place in a given
- *context* - subject to
- *intervening conditions* - which facilitated or constrained
- *action/interaction strategies* - thus leading to specific
- *consequences*.

The literature review used this template for library-research, and a system of coding was also used within this framework for parish data. The methods of coding used were those of *open* coding and *axial* coding (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

1.4.2 Open coding

Open coding is a "word-by-word, line-by-line analysis that occurs every time data are collected" (Grbich 1999, 176). Data are thus broken down, examined, compared and conceptualised. Observation notes, early interviews with the pastoral leader and data from parishioners then led to more focused data collection as in the case of the parish-wide survey and interview program. Extended literature review and checking with respondents were strategies used to develop, test and re-rest the conceptual labels, categories and properties placed on happenings, events and other phenomena observed in the course of the study (Glaser 1998). Themes were therefore allowed to emerge from the data. To prevent "labelling and conceptual forcing" (Grbich 1999, 176), triangulation with similar contexts and phenomena was performed through the literature review. Data

from interviews with the parishioners and the pastoral leader offered "some of the phenomenological qualities of the experience of themes as emerging *lived meanings* in life." These themes are variously defined as:

- the experience of focus, of meaning, of point but at best a simplification ...
- not objects one encounters at certain points or moments ...
- the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand (van Manen 1990, 87–88).

Progressive analysis occurred in the selection of those who chose to make additional comments or offer theological reflections upon the phenomenon. The analysis took on a cyclical nature (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Taylor and Bogdan 1984) as it evolved into a series of encounters through short conversations or meetings at particular events with the pastoral leader and a total of 72 parishioners. These encounters prompted the development of theoretical insights that in turn produced a "summary of themes" (Grbich 1999, 232). The encounters provided a dialogical process using a form of purposive sampling as described by Robson.

> [In a case study] the principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgment as to typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project ... and from analysis of the results extend the sample in ways guided by their emerging theory (1993, 141–142).[83]

The rationale behind the formation of an emerging theme was expressed in:

- the desire to make sense;
- the sense or meaning we are able to make of something;
- the openness to something new or unknown;
- the process of insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure.

[83] Taylor refers to Taylor and Bogdan's sampling methodology (1998, 93), as a way of "consciously varying the data selection (in their case, people) to give a broad range of perspectives. It is a research focus not on the number of interviews but on the potential of each interview to develop theoretical insights" (2003, 21–22, f/n 43).

A theme therefore becomes "the means to get at the notion ... give shape to the shapeless ... and describe the content of the notion" (van Manen 1990, 88). The phenomenon itself and the complex relationships within the phenomenon therefore guided the sampling and the analysis. The diversity and richness of respondents guided the extension and depth of the sample. Emerging themes were then re-analysed to develop further categories.[84]

1.4.3 Axial coding

This form of coding has a flexible and free-flowing relationship with open coding and also with the processes of theological reflection as noted in Chapter 1 (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 1996). Axial coding involves intensive analysis of one category that has been developed in open coding. It is used to develop connections between this category and its subcategories. The process requires a search through the empirical data, the researcher's life knowledge and experience, and her/his theoretical and research literature knowledge, in order to develop an expanded category (Grbich 1999, 176). Glaser (1992) argues that this intensive analysis can happen as one incident is compared to another incident and then compared to emerging categories. However, I found it useful to see the process as the development of categories into sub–categories (or properties) through theological reflection as in Van Loon's South Australian study on the spirituality of nursing care (1995). For example, Van Loon's core category "Connecting with the patient" was broken down by axial coding into connecting as:

- a blending of spirits;
- an inter-subjective energy flow;
- caring touch;
- assisted passage in the dying process;
- allowing the spirit to travel on after death;
- a liturgy to celebrate the spirit's transcendence.[85]

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[84] See Robson for another description of the use of "factor analysis as either an exploratory or a confirmatory tool to identify themes in texts" (1993, 277–279).

[85] See Mountain's study on children and prayer. She develops categories that break down into properties supporting, clarifying or articulating the overarching concept. These allow more accurate pastoral strategies to develop (2005).

Examples of sequential analysis can be seen in Appendix 4. They demonstrate progressive clarification of themes through identification of clusters of key words and phrases. Data initially classified using this method used a process of inductive analysis, in which "the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data: they emerge out of the data rather than being decided prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton 1987, 150). Emerging categories were then integrated with data from library research, and this, in turn, was linked to the discipline of theological reflection that, as seen in Grbich's template indicated above, has similar foci to axial coding.

Patton offers a helpful differentiation of typologies used in this study to distinguish between indigenous and analyst–constructed typologies. "Indigenous" describes those classification systems made up of categories that originate in the cognitive and verbal processes of the respondents. Wherever possible, the words and phrases of the respondents were retained.[86] Corbin and Strauss call these catchy, suggestive, summarising words and phrases "*in vivo*" codes. They teach the researcher to discard external, derived constructs (and their own favourite labels) and instead be guided by context, causal and intervening conditions for a more accurate interpretation (1990, 69). This mode of analysis respects the theology and reflective ability to be found within the people of God. The complementary discipline of phenomenology invites us to "engage with phenomena in our world and make sense of them directly and immediately" (Crotty 1998, 79). We then ensure that we "bracket out" presuppositions and prejudice as best we can so that the experience of the phenomena can speak to us first hand (Crotty 1996).[87] This connects with those who use theological reflection as an interpretive resource and enables the researcher to start with the text.[88]

> Much recent pastoral theology takes up [the] job of analysing culture's religious presumptions, assuming responsibility for the 'lacuna' that Edward Farley later says systematic theology has overlooked – 'the theological interpretation of situations' (Miller-McLemore 2005, 100).

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[86] Ammerman uses "native" categories to cluster data to express the nature and ethos of the local congregation. This native category is then used to interpret data reflexively (1998).

[87] See also Whitehead and Whitehead (1995, 67–75) for a description of bracketing from the perspective of theological reflection. Augsberger explains the related concept of interpathy in cross-cultural pastoral listening and counselling (1986, 30–31).

[88] 'Text' signifies questionnaire data, transcripts, observations and any relevant parish documents. Library research generated a much wider selection of texts.

Renata Tesch's typology of approaches to qualitative analysis and the four basic criteria and associated tasks guided my analysis as this study moved from coding to analysis to interpretation (1991).[89]

- *The characteristics of language*. Highlight words, expressions and phrases that create emphasis, questions, clarity and dissonance.
- *The discovery of regularities*. Identify recurring themes that can be checked with respondents.
- *The comprehension of the meaning of the text or action*. Enable categories to form through theological reflection and dialogue.
- *Reflection*. Identify the dynamic interaction between reflection and the previous three criteria.

1.4.4 The players, the plot and the place

Tesch's typology suits an interpretive structure that can be used flexibly for the construction of categories. "Analyst-constructed" words or phrases describe patterns, categories and themes that "appear to exist but are not a part of a participant's vocabulary" (Patton 1987, 152).[90] I developed a stage in my research one step removed from analyst-constructed words and phrases. The process used Kinast's suggestion that the stimulus for minimising bias in constructing these analyses can come from three sources that resemble the elements of a drama or a play.[91] This proves a relevant metaphor for a case study approach. Kinast suggests that the question "How did I get here?" is a key to entering an experience and theological reflection then identifies the dynamics of the context (1996, 45–49). Kinast's schema was chosen as an appropriate way of analysing data, given the religious framework of the study. Normally the person themself uses this tool but in this case it was the researcher who used the framework for

[89] There are many software packages available for this task. Grbich reviews the programs that were available at the time (1999, 239–257). In my Masters research I found that NUDIST distanced me from the data. Reflective engagement with people through dialogue is actually what I do in ministry as I listen to couples, prepare a funeral, develop a liturgy or construct a marriage ritual for a blended family.

[90] Virginia Satir's (1976) work in family therapy introduced the four categories of *Computer*, *Distracter*, *Blamer*, and *Placater* to describe how people deal with conflict in a variety of ways. She used the category of *Leveller* to describe an appropriate response to conflict.

[91] The players, the plot and the place.

the PL's data as developed in *Category 2 - The Pastoral Leader's ability to analyse and critique meta-narratives*. The analysis looked for and identified:

(i) The Players. Who is directly involved? I looked for roles, especially dominant roles. Relationships were examined and the theological implications were considered.
(ii) The Plot. What are the issues or values at stake? I identified the issues people faced through analysis of images or symbolic language. I isolated dominant issues and explored the link to theological dimensions and the Christian story.
(iii) The Place. What is the setting for the events?

In this study *place* was identified by the factors that interacted to create the experience. The researcher identified a dynamic network of forces by using social analysis to uncover the elements that structure it to be the way it is. These elements may be economic, political, cultural, social, gender or generational. The dominant factors described *the place* and situated *the plot* and *the players* within a larger social context. While analyst-constructed the researcher's allocation of words or phrases also helped to simplify the task of analysis and had a number of advantages that Kinast identified and which were apparent in this study:

- Being creative in naming the players may break stereotypes, reverse roles or elicit hidden qualities.
- Identifying the plot depends on exploring mythologies, terminology or scripts, methodology or theory application and dénouements or outcomes.
- Locating the place looks for where the setting displays a particular cultural, political/sexual or social character (1996, 100–104).

Data analysis in this study also presupposed the complementarity of theological reflection with qualitative data analysis. Chapter 2 will develop a rationale for this interpretive methodology. However there is one more aspect to the unfolding case study of Aspendale that must be outlined.

1.5 A New Direction for the Research

The project began in 1996 and the new Archbishop commenced later that same year. He eliminated the non-ordained pastoral leader from the options for the Archdiocese. Within six months, the newly established Priests Deployment Committee (now composed of all priests or bishops with one lay pastoral planner/researcher and a lay administrative secretary) had initiated research into a different set of options.[92] I had completed fifteen months of a thirty-six month research process that was integrated with a PhD program and the project had been effectively concluded. The direction to place everything (data, findings etc.) "on the backburner"[93] until an appropriate time or context arrived, created a difficult dilemma. My journal notes from that period record factual observations and my feelings. I will outline some of the observations.[94]

- The body authorised by the Archdiocese to contract the research no longer existed. There was minimal continuity of personnel.[95]
- The Aspendale model had been dropped and now existed in a feedback vacuum. There was no place to take either the data or tentative findings.[96]
- The collaborative style of ministry of the initial planning group was not compatible with the new ethos. Without consultation with the interested parties who had researched and endorsed the previous models, the rationale for the model was abandoned and a footnote in the *Priests Deployment Committee: Draft Report* announced the demise of the project (1998, 3).[97] In theological education or

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[92] *Priests Deployment Committee: Draft Report.* The "Brief to the Committee" lists the members of the group. April 2 1997 (1998, 21–22).

[93] This phrase was used by one of the parish planners who was responsible for the initial project.

[94] It was disconcerting to see the project disappear. The technical difficulty of designing a major shift in research questions from micro (lay leader/parish) to macro (collaborative ministry/Catholic Church) was accompanied by the possibility of terminating doctoral studies. The new strategy from the Priests Development Committee happened just after the first Parish-wide questionnaire and just before the focus group follow-up commenced. I am grateful for the direction and support of my supervisor. The parish protested by indicating to the Archbishop their decision not to participate in the new survey.

[95] The Pastoral Leadership Task Group was replaced by the Priests Deployment Committee. Three of the previous members continued. The Committee was now composed of ordained clergy apart from one woman (administrative assistant) and a lay researcher. The change of title seemed to indicate a narrowing of focus from "pastoral leadership" to "priest leadership", a movement away from an inclusive model (lay and ordained) to an exclusive model (ordained).

[96] Canon 517.2 indicates the appointment was appropriate. Researchers expected progressive feedback to inform pastoral planners (Dixon 1995, 13).

[97] The footnote bears repeating. "The only exception was the exclusion from consideration of the 'Pastoral Leader Model' proposed in the *Tomorrow's Church Report.* The Archbishop indicated he wished there to be priestly leadership in all parish structures" (1998, 3).

reflection it is often the process rather than the specific outcome that is important. No data from Aspendale was officially accessed before the decision was made and there was no wider discussion in the Archdiocese. The Pastoral Leader, the parishioners and the researcher were not consulted, not even to develop critical feedback based on the difficulties associated with the model.

This was not just a hiatus or an example of a newly appointed parish priest deciding "to undo the accepted practices of that community ... and there seems to be no redress."[98] Aspendale and the researcher experienced alienation and disenfranchised responses to the new model.[99] However this stimulated a new phase of research, noting that focus on

> the practices of one local community is inevitably an act of focused particularity ... such particularity need not occur at the expense of universality ... a deep engagement with an authentic particularity can result in the accessing of universal themes. Universality and particularity can become mutually enriching rather than exclusive extremes. The very particularity of the examination of a local community, *in situ* in their contemporary context, allows an exploration of the whole (Taylor 2003, 7).[100]

1.5.1 A new focus on dialogue

If this experience of a lack of dialogue reflected the "whole" then I was interested in the dynamics of dialogue, communication and theological reflection as expressed in the "whole." Limited, selective or exclusive dialogue is no dialogue at all. Dialogue is very different to discussion especially where a shared praxis approach leads to the valuing, holding and letting-be of the story of another. Mutual trust is not only required for dialogue to be effective, it develops and evolves as dialogue happens. From an educational perspective, it has a character that is essentially inclusive and expressive of community. Since dialogue

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[98] This report refers twice to the letter from an Australian published in *The Tablet* of 21 September 2002. She expressed the hope that "collegiality which should be apparent in the higher echelons of the Church structure would somehow percolate down to parish level." The letter is cited on the website of Brian Gleeson: "Power-sharing in the Catholic Church Today: Making Collegiality Really Happen." http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aet_1/Bgleeson.htm.

[99] It may have been C.S. Lewis who remarked that Jesus said "Feed my sheep" NOT "Experiment on my rats!" This expresses some of the frustration at the lack of consultation, feedback and dialogue.

[100] Taylor builds on Tracy (1981) and Veling (1996). He argues for an intense focus on "*this* body, *this* people, *this* community, *this* tradition, *this* place, *this* moment, *this* neighbour - until the very concreteness

> is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanised, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's depositing ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between men (sic) who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth (Freire 1970, 77).

Freire sees dialogue as an "existential necessity" (I would add missional necessity) for the world to be transformed through his three basic pillars of education where (i) humanisation is the basic human vocation; (ii) people are capable of changing their reality; and (iii) education is never neutral (77).

I added the adjective "missional" because, in the Aspendale context, practical theology belongs at the interface between Church and society. As it "explores the practice of the Church, sited in cultural context, a missionary dialogue commences" (Taylor 2003, 8).[101] I reasoned that if dialogue were curtailed or limited then mission is diminished. This report will outline at various points, Fuellenbach's integration of Gospel and Church Tradition as partners in dialogue (and in practical theology) with the two-phase experience of the community gathered in worship and scattered in mission (2002, 104–107). Over twenty-five years ago the Whiteheads suggested that the "emphasis today moves toward understanding the community of faith as the locus of theological and pastoral reflection ... a responsibility of the community itself, a corporate task" (1980, 5), and this emphasis remains.[102] Taylor affirms

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in any particularity releases us to serve the concreteness of the whole as an internally related reality through and through" (2003, 7).

[101] See also Paul Ballard and John Pritchard (1996) and Swinton (2000) for the development of a practical theology that takes the Church back to its origins as a missionary Church. Farley's approach to experience, when taken beyond the clerical or ecclesial domain, enhances interpretation of this interface (1983; 1983b; 2000).

[102] Kinast (1996) concurs with the Whiteheads' approach to ministry formation and community. The Spiritual Wisdom style of reflection on everyday life experiences (Killen and de Beer 1994) develops elements from Groome (1980). Schreiter (1985; 1997) offers an Inculturation model and the Feminist style of writers such as Rebecca Chopp (1991) and Sally McFague (1982) retrieved and reinterpreted themes that had been lost within the Christian tradition. Browning's Practical style (1991) attempted to explore the conditions that make normative claims possible for the religious practices of faith communities. See Kinast (2000) for comparative summaries of each model. Each strongly values community as a formative factor in theology.

> the study of the practices of the particular as a potentially rich theological task ... such a theological trend takes seriously theological affirmations of God as Incarnation, revealed in the particularity of the whole person, and God as Trinity, revealed in the particularity of the relational community (2003, 7).

This report will conclude that the structural dynamics of Archdiocesan leadership transition in Melbourne effectively dislocated dialogue and compromised community. Data from Aspendale became the thematic prompts for wider reading and analysis while the change in leadership became the prompt for the search for concomitant experiences of the breakdown of dialogue and community, and by implication, the breakdown of mission.

What does it mean ecclesiologically if Christian community is designed to value and embody dialogue and if exclusion or marginalisation of any party from dialogue effectively inhibits the missional character of the whole group? Veling, following Freire, proposes that one of the tasks of education is to free people "to deal critically and creatively with their social reality, rather than simply fitting them into it" (1996, 119).[103] Will we be people who can transform the world or simply those who are acted upon while others write the scripts. Participants from Aspendale reflected on:

- their experience of the lay pastoral leader;
- their membership of a Church working together on a specific issue;
- their sense of belonging to, and identifying with, members of a wider Church community to which they all belonged and with whom they interacted in some way;
- the meaning of consequent values and expectations.

The fact that these respondents belonged to a specific and identifiable community is an important aspect of the study.

1.5.2 Areas of investigation

The following four questions therefore summarise the areas of inquiry behind the topics discussed in this chapter and indicate the initial areas of investigation. Chapter

[103] "... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8: 31–32). Jesus promises not only cognitive freedom, but also the freedom to do good.

Two addresses the rationale behind the method of data collection and analysis that was used to explore these questions:

1. What is the experience of lay pastoral leadership in a parish context traditionally oriented to pastoral leadership by an ordained priest?[104]
2. What models of theological reflection are demonstrated by parish, archdiocesan and national responses to the development of lay pastoral leadership?
3. What models of dialogue and consultation are demonstrated by parish, archdiocesan and national responses to the development of lay pastoral leadership?
4. Is Aspendale's experience symptomatic of a general absence of dialogue and consultation within the Catholic Church?

[104] This research question was based on the original topic. "An evaluation of the dynamics of change as the Catholic Parish of St. Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, transitions from Ordained Priest to Lay Pastoral Leader."

Chapter 2

The Aspendale Study: Research Methodology Rationale

2.1 Qualitative Methodology, Grounded Theory and Theological Reflection

This study was not so much concerned with evaluating the attitudes and beliefs before and after the pastoral leader's ministry, as with gauging responses to new models of ministry and analysing multi–level influences, particularly after the change of Archbishop and resultant shifts in priorities. Three areas of inquiry, each with its own methodological base, overlap and complement one another as basic tools of theological reflection:

- Identification of, and theological engagement with, multi–level (parish, diocesan, national, international) thematic responses to collaborative ministry and lay ecclesial ministry as they emerged throughout the study (Groome 1980; 1989; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Browning 1991). Chapters One and Four engage the wider literature.[1]
- Analysis (through coding and categorising) of data collected at a parish level (Van Manen 1990, 53–76;[2] Robson 1993, 370–407; Grbich 1999[3]). The method has been outlined in Chapter 1. The coding and categorising is detailed in Chapter Three.
- The discussion and interpretation of the data analysis (Strauss 1987; Patton, 1987; Glaser 1992; 1998; Grbich 1999, 217–238).[4] Chapter Four discusses the findings in

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[1] Thomas Groome offered a model of Christian education and theological education from within a Catholic context. His work spanned the time frame of the literature review (1980–2005). James and Evelyn Whitehead developed a model of theological reflection that draws on community life, collaborative leadership and personal experience. Don Browning offered an integrated methodology he describes as *Fundamental Practical Theology*.

[2] Max Van Manen understands "lived experience" as both the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. Reflection upon experience is the key to new "reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (1990, 36). He cites Wilhelm Dilthey's thesis that lived experience is to the soul what breath is to the body. "Just as our body needs to breathe, our soul requires the fulfilment and expansion of its existence in the reverberations of emotional life" (1985, 59). For Van Manen, lived experience is the "breathing of meaning. In the flow of life, consciousness breathes meaning in a 'to and fro' movement" (36).

[3] The research of Colin Robson and Carol Grbich in Human and Health Sciences aligns with theological perspectives that value narrative. "Words ... are a speciality of humans and their organisations. Narratives, accounts, and other collections of words are variously described as 'rich', 'full', and 'real', and contrasted with the 'thin abstractions of numbers'" (Robson 1993, 370).

[4] Michael Patton and Anselm Strauss focus on evaluation in qualitative research while Barney Glaser contributed to my early grounding in analysis of data. Grbich affirms the self-awareness and subjectivity

the context of similar phenomena. Chapter Five uses key Catholic documents to provide a theological template and Chapter Six highlights the major interpretive themes that emerged from the data.

For those seeking alternatives to quantitative methodology, the "hegemony of a single research modality" (Whyte 1991, 19), has often been questioned by many researchers (Habermas 1979; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The complexity of the world and the need to struggle with "questions of meanings, understanding, perceptions, and other subjectivities" (Sprenkle 1994, 227), enable us to value the contribution of qualitative methodology for studies on religion, faith and relationships. Lincoln and Guba (1986) affirmed the value of such open-ended inquiry.

This study embraces an expression of qualitative research in its use of grounded theory. The focus in grounded theory is the "day-to-day life of people as it is actually happening" where "[m[otivation, interaction and the construction of reality can be understood only if the researcher moves into the setting" (Grbich 1999, 172). A researcher with fixed goals and hypotheses may miss important dynamic developments since participants' insight and understanding rely on their own agendas and goals. At times these goals will be diverse, overlapping and even contradictory. Because grounded theory is primarily concerned with explanation and diagnosis, exploration and understanding, the question of measurement, as Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay points out, is sometimes inappropriate.

> Can we measure the happiness of a child at a party? The security of a loving relationship? The ambition of a school leaver? The despair of unemployment? The private pain of divorce? All these things can be explored and understood, but trying to measure them may be an inappropriate goal (1993, 311).

Glaser suggested that two major questions underpin grounded theory:

> What is the chief concern or problem in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem? What category, or what property of what category, does this incident indicate (1992, 4)?

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of the researcher and sees the major issues affecting interpretation as "the frames applied by the researcher, the researcher's interpretative focus, and the reader's position" (1999, 238).

The Aspendale research located these two factors in the conflicted issues surrounding the difference between lay and ordained leadership and "the theoretical sampling of events, incidents and populations direct[ed] data collection from the earliest stage" (Grbich 1999, 174). Chapter One has described this process in detail. Chapter Three will indicate the developing categories arrived at through data analysis. This form of research was also chosen because of earlier experience with it. Earlier research led me to value qualitative methodologies and my role in theological education and formation explored the complementarity of the two fields.[5] Evolving methodologies in Christian education and practical theology (Groome 1980; 1989; Browning 1991) complement qualitative themes that appear in contemporary texts on theological reflection by Kinast (1996; 2000). For example, Groome suggested that critical reflection has five movements:

- Expressing present praxis.
- Critical reflection on present praxis.
- Engaging the Christian Story and Vision.
- A dialectical hermeneutic between praxis and interpretations of Story and Vision.
- Decision and response that moves towards new Christian praxis (1989, 89–90).

The two initial movements are essential, qualitative sources for the theologically reflective researcher. The task of expressing present praxis corresponds to the concept of 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), that is, "a description which specifies everything that a reader may need to know to understand the findings ... " (Robson 1995, 405). Chapter One has outlined in detail (thick description) the nature and parameters of the Aspendale project. A clear indication of present praxis is a component of Browning's descriptive theology (1991, 223–227). In order to clarify and focus what is meant by present praxis, Browning indicated the broad brushstrokes that already adorn the canvas of inquiry in a Church context by identifying some of the influences that affect parish research.

> Theological perspective, ... fore-understandings ... as psychologists, sociologists, or anthropologists, ... theological predilections ... pre-commitments ... and implicit theological convictions coloured, however faintly, their description (1991, 78).

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[5] Research into marriage enrichment programs and the marriage instrument Prepare-Enrich (Olson 1982; 1998) helped to develop skills in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Harris et al. (1992) suggest that the data on pre-marriage courses was highly individuated but recurrent patterns and themes emerge. Similarly each parish may be unique but demonstrate common themes.

These aspects of the Aspendale study, as outlined in Chapter One, also embraced Veling's view that "intentional communities need to be supported and encouraged as one of the most viable options open to us for praxis–education" (1995, 182). The theological reflector (or researcher) must distinguish and articulate the powerful themes that influence the area of research and Veling further divides this task into relational, affective, aesthetic and cognitive modes in his discussion of Groome's concept of shared praxis.

> Knowledge of the world can never be detached from being-in-the-world, and if we want to know (if we want to understand), we need to engage our whole way of being-in-the-world: our memory, our imagination, our feelings, our thinking, our actions, and our critical appreciative, and creative capacities (1995, 181).

Grounded theory, and this study, therefore uses open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Grbich 1999, 176–178) to comprehend these experiences. Chapter One describes the method and rationale behind these forms of coding and Chapter Three applies them to the Aspendale data. From these emerging categories and themes the researcher can then begin a "theory-building" as opposed to a "theory-testing" process.

It is also important to clarify whether substantive theory or formal theory is being developed (Layder 1993, 3–4; 42–44). Layder suggests that formal theory will focus on the development of lay ministry as a broad concept while substantive theory will focus on a particular lay ministry, in this case the Aspendale parish leader. According to Layder it is therefore possible, using data analysis, "to construct formal theories on the basis of particular substantive theories grounded in data" (43). Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the analysis of data that undergirds substantive theory. Using an extensive literature review guided by this analysis, Chapter Four then tentatively explores formal theory by engaging the wider world of lay ministry within the Catholic Church. This process was guided by Denzin's (1994) suggestion that in order to be effective, grounded theory must set up a dynamic interaction between propositions generated by the particular data and broader theoretical concepts. Glaser's early approach, adopted by this study, encouraged the researcher to implement the practice of in-depth reading and review in the substantive and theoretical areas being researched

(1978, 139). This enables any merging substantive theory to be located accurately between the initial literature review of Chapter One and the developing review in Chapter Four. This process also allows the original data (people) to speak again and enables any emerging or substantive theory to be consolidated.

2.2 Grounded Theory, Case Study and Theological Reflection

The principles of case study research were applied to this experimental community. In case study methodology particular cases are chosen and the actions and issues

> presented in these cases are, as is always the case with practical action, not completed. We leave the stories and the issues they contain in midstream ... This itself is an insight into the nature of practical action; it deals with issues that are fluid and that have evolved out of old issues and fade into new ones ... to illustrate one view of practical thought in a religious context. They will help us see the complexity and richness of practical thought (Browning 1991, 17–18).

This study traced the themes as Aspendale "evolved out of old issues and fade[d] into new ones." There is freedom for difference to emerge as communities express diversity in spite of common rules and documents based on Canon Law and Vatican teaching. A parish is studied as a culture in its own right "without assuming from the start that the reality categories that apply to one instance also apply to another" and if

> theology is to recover its reality reference, it must be meaningfully resituated in the *ekklesia* as that discipline which grasps the constants of the faith community's thought and action (Mudge and Poling 1987, xxiii).

2.2.1 Grounded theory

The following brief summary of grounded theory, case study principles and theological reflection will be explicated more fully later in this chapter. Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Glaser 1992) is an analytic inductive strategy or technique where individual power, influence, choice and development of meaning are used to generate "substantive and formal theory" (Grbich 1999, 171). The study used a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis of lay parish

ministry. This method suited the relatively limited parameters of "small scale, everyday" parish life where "processes, relationships, meanings and adaptations are the focus" (Grbich 1999, 173).

This method of inquiry complemented the way theological reflection was also used to review a growing body of literature and allied research as the project unfolded.[6] Unlike Strauss and Corbin, Glaser dispenses with the development of researcher-generated hypotheses from early data. Codes and categories emerge from the raw data and these codes direct the next phase of data collection. This becomes "code saturation" or confirmation, that integrates with "emerging theory" (Glaser 1992, 102). This open and less directive approach allows categories to emerge with an indigenous feel. These themes then guide on-going field research and focus the accompanying (and expanding) exploration of literature and theology. Because grounded theory is inductively derived from the phenomenon it represents, the researcher moves close to participants to understand their verbal and non-verbal interaction and their construction of reality in the context of everyday life.[7] The researcher then sets out to discover the main problem and to identify what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem (Glaser 1992). For Grbich, "the most appropriate questions involve an examination of problems and processes" (1999, 173). Subsequent questions focus on the role and identity of key players (pastoral leader) or groups (the parish). One does not begin with a theory and then prove it, rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Theory is therefore inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents.

Typically there is "not a precise point at which data collection ends and analysis begins" and in practice the researcher will not find that "analysis and interpretation are neatly separated" (Patton 1987, 144). This flexibility allows the researcher, using the paradigm of the human as instrument (Lincoln and Guba 1985), to make decisions on the value of particular data and respond to living and transcripted data (Stake 1995,

[6] Vivienne Mountain (2005) used a similar methodology to research children's understanding of prayer. Qualitative interpretation of data was complemented by theological texts on prayer (Rahner 1958; Brueggemann 1986; Nouwen 1998).

91–105). Strauss and Corbin provide a degree of validity through techniques of interpretation (1990, 76–77) that offer a rigorous schema to ensure what Lincoln and Guba described as "credibility" (1985). They also provided criteria consistent with the themes of theological reflection. Lincoln and Guba's qualitative techniques are set out below (1985; 1986) and complementary theological practitioners are listed in brackets. These techniques:

- encourage thinking that goes beyond the confines of technical literature and personal experience as something new and fresh may yet emerge (Kinast 1996, 95–122);
- avoid standard ways of thinking about phenomena (Tracy 1981; Veling 1995);
- stimulate the inductive process (Groome 1980);
- focus on what is before you so that data can't be taken for granted (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995);
- recognise that the human instrument can adopt a holistic attitude to the phenomenon and its surrounding environment (Schreiter 1985;1997; Browning 1991);
- allow for clarification or challenge of assumptions made by the people who appear in the data (Whitehead and Whitehead 1986; 1991; 1992);
- enable the researcher to listen to what people are saying and what they mean. This element of immediacy is born in a context of open communication free from stereotypes (Farley 1983b; 1987; 2000; Augsburger 1986; Graham 1996).

Such techniques also restrain researchers from rushing past the diamonds in the rough when examining the data and force them to ask questions and only give tentative answers. Provisional labels can allow exploration or clarification of the possible meanings of concepts. These techniques were used as methodological filters throughout the interpretation phase.

2.2.2 Theological reflection and the researcher

The process of allowing themes to emerge enabled the researcher in this study to develop a creative conversation with practical theologians (Groome 1980; 1991;

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[7] Grounded theory "may well have been influenced by the phenomenological tradition, in particular the Husserlian concept of 'back to the things themselves'" (Grbich 1999, 171). Van Manen (1990) and Robert Crotty (1998) offer the phenomenological perspective for this study's data analysis.

Whitehead and Whitehead 1991; 1995; Browning 1991; Graham 1996; Kinast 1996; 2000) and relevant documents as discussed in Chapter Five. Groome contributed much to my early framework of theological reflection with his emphasis on dialogue and praxis. The Whiteheads provided an emphasis on the meaning of experience, community and ministry practice. Browning's *Fundamental Practical Theology* (1991) restored for me what Brian Kelty describes as "a place for reflection on the contemporary Church and the exercise of ministry" (2004, 125). Bonnie Miller-McLemore recognises Browning's earlier (1987) "well–established evaluation of the quasi–religious and ethical claims behind the cultures of psychology from Freud to behavioural science" (2005, 100) and thus Browning expanded my understanding of ministry as a pastoral counsellor with a social science background. Kinast's *Let Ministry Teach*, enabled me to develop a structured approach and gave me a methodology for the reflective possibilities of social analysis "that tries to get beneath the mere facts and look at the sources and structures that produce them" (1996, 98). The role of each approach will be clarified in depth as this chapter unfolds.

2.2.3 Case study methodology

The project focused on a local parish in an Australian context within the global scope of Catholic trends. The research was constructed around a case study methodology (Stake 1995; Yin 2003a; 2003b). The micro scenario (the Aspendale experience of lay parish leader) became the prompt to engage the macro scenario of the widespread shifts in identity and meaning of ministry within the Catholic Church. Case study research is not synonymous with sampling in survey-oriented research as if Aspendale were selected as an example of the whole (Grbich 1999, 68–71). This report does not defend the typicality of Aspendale nor deny the unique features or particularities. "The main use of sampling in single case studies" means a selection has to be made and this should be "determined by the research questions and the conceptual framework" (Robson 1993, 154–155).

The parish leader and members of the community itself were selected as the major research focus within the case study and visiting priests became a secondary focus. Robert Stake advises that sometimes

> a 'typical' case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases ... The first criterion should be to maximise what we can learn. Given our purposes, which cases are likely to lead us to understanding, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalisations (1995, 4).

Given that the pastoral leader was the first such official appointment in Australia, Aspendale was an "unusual case" that presented opportunities for the understanding, assertion and modification of generalisations that developed from the large body of research literature on Catholic lay ministry. Yin identifies Pilot Case Studies as an excellent source of data for the development of research procedures (2003a, 78–80). Stake's concept of *petites generalisations* (smaller points of connection to the whole) and *grandes generalisations* (resonance with other findings that is easily verified) was helpful. The focus on Aspendale was based on "uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself" (1995, 7–8). Robert Yin describes five types of *single* case study. Aspendale fits most closely with the *critical case* that normally tests a well-known set of propositions as well as the circumstances within which the propositions are believed to be true. Although this was a pioneering appointment in Australia, lay ministry in general and lay parish leadership in particular has been reviewed world-wide for many years. However the appointment's evolutionary nature challenged the researcher to confirm, test or extend any current theory or theology. A single case can be used "to determine whether a theory's propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (Yin 2003a, 40). Other single–case types are:

- the *extreme*, *rare* or *unique* case;
- conversely, the *representative* or *typical* case captures and affirms the commonplace;
- the *revelatory* case that illuminates a normally inaccessible phenomenon;
- the *longitudinal* case where a single case is studied at two or more different points of time (Yin 2003a, 41–42).

Apart from the *critical* case, the closest to Aspendale is the *representative* case but the evolutionary nature of definitions and descriptions of lay and ordained ministry renders this inappropriate. This study is a blend of grounded theory, case study and theological reflection and as a *representative case* Aspendale is an acceptable source of data that also fits with grounded theory. Indeed Yin highlights the possibility of *Pilot Case Studies* being an excellent source of data for ongoing development and refinement of

research procedures (2003a, 78–80). This is precisely the role that was allocated to Aspendale. Although many countries have lay pastoral leaders, Robert Schreiter believes there is great value in "mapping a local theology" (1986, 22) that creates a mutual, empathic encounter between "Church tradition and local themes" (33). With this goal in mind this study exposed data from Aspendale to "analysis in the generation of substantive and formal theory" (Grbich 1999, 171), as it interacted with a cross–section of research and literature within the Catholic Church.

2.2.4 Aspendale: A case study approach to theological inquiry

In the early 1990s Donovan concluded his survey, *What are they saying about the Ministerial Priesthood*?, with a challenge to all those who seek to limit the debate to simple, predictable themes.

> At the present time there is obviously no single Roman Catholic theology of the ministerial priesthood. This should be neither surprising nor disheartening. The ordained ministry is a rich and many-sided reality, and there are a variety of legitimate approaches to it. What is important in a period of change is that one be open to, and include in one's understanding of it, as many of its elements and aspects as possible (1992, 138).[8]

If Donovan is correct, this era presented an invitational spirit ripe with new possibilities. The scene was set for the emergence of a rich, reflective methodology where culture and context, functional and ontological perspectives, experience and tradition, Church and ministry, lay and ordained, could develop a biblical and theological response to contemporary needs.

Was this the case in Melbourne as diocesan planners sought to listen and be in tune with a multiplicity of factors?[9] One year after Donovan's work, the *Tomorrow's Church: Discussion Document* highlighted the need for critical examination and innovative practice.

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[8] Donovan reviewed Vatican II teaching and post–conciliar developments, both theological and demographic. He outlined the writings of Schillebeeckx, Rahner and Congar and contrasted them with Ratzinger and Galot. Contemporary themes and demographics in the United States were also explored.

[9] Thomas Lane's *A Priesthood in Tune: Theological Reflections on Ministry* (1993), provides a musical/listening metaphor of symphonic creativity that is helpful in assessing dialogue and theological reflection.

> Changes taking place in the Church and society demand that we respond in new ways to the mission given to us in the gospel. The Second Vatican Council inspired the Catholic community to examine itself and develop models of ministry and leadership in tune with both the gospel and contemporary society (1993, 1).

These pre-Aspendale discussion papers were circulated to parishes as part of a discernment process. Vision, energy and passion combined with theological reflection to echo Donovan's insight on an ecclesial praxis where "some things will have to be tried before it will be known whether they are truly of God or not" (1992, 140).[10] Aspendale existed within a much wider set of problems and opportunities. Following the change of Archbishop it offered an evolving case study with the potential to explore methods and patterns of consultation, dialogue and theological reflection within the Catholic Church. A case study should investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 2003a, 13). A quantitative research project will generally separate a phenomenon from its context so that the variables can be narrowed and controlled and so "an investigator can manipulate behaviour directly, precisely and systematically" (8). A four year project like Aspendale will inevitably have to "deal with the entangled situation between phenomenon and context, but usually with non–contemporary events" and so the case study inquiry copes with a

> technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points ... as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (13–14).

Case study research blends the task of developing and clarifying descriptions and the task of formulating interpretations. Within a constructivist paradigm the researcher can

[10] The Gamaliel principle dates back to the early Church (Acts 5:33–39). John McKenzie describes Gamaliel as "a member of the council which passed judgment on Peter and the apostles for teaching the gospel and advised ... that the movement would collapse of itself if it were of men (sic) and if it were from God they would be wrong in opposing it" (1965, 296). "Wait and see" is an essential principle in reflective practice. If theory can develop from reflecting upon practice then our study of Church history should pave the way for a culturally engaged and theologically relevant pastoral practice. "Grounded theory is a rigorous technique within the theory-generating approach. It has the potential to enable researchers to develop theoretical propositions (Robson 1995, 180).

offer generalisations based on these interpretations,[11] and enable current participants or future readers to access good raw material

> for their own generalising. The emphasis is on description of things that readers ordinarily pay attention to, particularly places, events, and people, not only commonplace description but 'thick description', the interpretations of the people most knowledgeable about the case (Stake 1995, 102).

Dean Hoge, a sociologist at the Catholic University of America in the late 1980's, appears to write as a practical theologian.[12] He believed that the shortage of priests was an institutional problem not a spiritual one. A solution would be found in responsive, theologically reflective institutional leadership where the option "to do nothing" would condemn local communities to survive without the Eucharist or default to lay leadership, a "new form of American high-church congregationalism" (1987, vii). This sign of the times was reflected in the *Tomorrow's Church* use of *Gaudium et Spes*.

> The Church has always had the duty of scrutinising the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel ... We must therefore recognise and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics ... [and] decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose (n. 4; n. 11).[13]

Hoge's set of multiple options (or "dramatic characteristics") was typical of the overseas research available to Melbourne planners as parish restructuring and the development of lay ministry became policy. Melbourne implemented versions of Type A and Type D from Hoge's schema of options for dealing with the shortage of priests (1987, 86–206).

> Type A suggested a combination of parish restructuring and a re-education program to lower expectations of priestly services (86–107).
> Type D suggested the expansion and development of lay ministries (182–206).

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[11] In a *positivist* approach, reality is viewed as external to the researcher. A *postpositivist* approach suggests that knowledge about a reality can only be approximated but may be developed through a properly constructed methodology such as grounded theory. The *critical* paradigm critiques economic, or other, structures and looks towards liberating outcomes. A *constructivist* paradigm focuses on individual constructions of social reality and validates their contribution to knowledge (Grbich 1999, 7).

[12] The boundaries between disciplines have become blurred. The dialogue between the social sciences and theology can, given careful methodology, enrich and focus our questions and findings. Hoge outlines a methodology based on surveys in 1985 that emerged from a collaboration between Catholic and non-Catholic Universities, diocesan and religious priests, bishops, educators, and social researchers (1987, 217–225).

[13] The Melbourne Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning spent two years developing, from data and projections, a variety of experimental models.

Following wide consultation, the Archbishop implemented this latter model by appointing a lay parish leader to Aspendale in January 1996.[14] However, later that year, as already outlined in Chapter One, the new Archbishop directed that:

- the Aspendale appointment should conclude after three years;
- such an experiment would not be attempted again;
- it was no longer relevant for pastoral planning.

The nature and parameters of the case study had altered but the methodology was flexible enough to work with the changes.

2.2.5 The role of the literature review

In grounded theory the literature review also has a flexible and developing role that can be readily integrated with theological reflection. There are caveats for those who, having undertaken other forms of research,

> may think that the purpose of a literature review is to determine the answers about what is known on a topic; in contrast, experienced investigators review previous research to develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic (Yin 2003a, 9).

Some research requires "a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the literature [and] detailed background knowledge of the relevant discipline" before the project even begins (Robson, 1993, 23). As a Protestant relatively unversed in Catholic culture and theology, the research literature on lay ministry and theology provided a quietly flowing "background resource" as the early data was collected (Walker 1985, 13). When the data analysis was dislocated following the change in Archbishop, Glaser's approach was adopted and modified. Literature reviews are often seen as contentious in grounded theory and Grbich clarifies the debate. For Glaser they should be avoided

> until the first core variable or category has emerged. Only then should the substantive area relating to that variable or category be reviewed and from there

[14] Patrick Dunn, a New Zealand priest researching in Melbourne, wrote that "many of these ministers are very experienced, and have just as much theological training as priests" (1990: 125). These lay ministers worked mainly in religious education, youth ministry and general pastoral work. He did not consider the specialist concept of Lay Parish Leader.

> the literature review should be on-going. For Strauss, a literature review may (or may not) take place when the initial variables/categories emerge and may (or may not) occur after this time (1999, 174–175).

The literature review and library-based research was prompted and guided by the themes and categories emerging from the data analysis that had engaged an existing but limited literature review. The review expanded constantly as it was stimulated by, and interacted with these themes. Once the basic themes at Aspendale had been identified, the literature from the wider faith tradition became a major factor in the research. Kinast advocates "a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between lived experience and the established faith tradition" (2000, 67), even though the literature engaged as this relationship develops does not always produce a smooth or harmonious path. The goal is not to be in conflict with the tradition but to befriend it through dialogue even though the outcome is

> a dialectical relationship and a critical correlation - and in the case of feminist and inculturation styles of theological reflection, a hermeneutics of suspicion. To achieve the type of correlation it envisions, theological reflection encourages an assertive approach, which questions, examines, explores and tests both the tradition and contemporary experience (2000, 67–68).

Through the literature review the Aspendale themes engaged Scripture, the Magisterium, Canon Law, Catholic researchers and theologians, and the voice of the lay and ordained faithful.[15] The task of integrating Catholic theory and praxis provided a steep learning curve for a Protestant evangelical pastor from a small reformed tradition with an emphasis on congregational autonomy, lay presidency and an open, ecumenical approach to what we call The Lord's Supper.[16] Kinast's approach complements Veling's description of praxis as a way of knowing that operates out of practical reason, in contrast to speculative reason. Kinast indicates that praxis[17]

> holds theory and action together ... the two cannot really be separated, just as knowing and being cannot be separated. When we speak of hermeneutics or education as having to do with understanding, the temptation is to place the

[15] See Fuellenbach's outline of these basic sources (2002, 104–107).

[16] My ecumenical and pastoral connections ensured an empathic and informed relationship but I had quite a way to go in absorbing cultural and theological nuances. Later discussion of the role of the researcher outlines positive relationships with Catholic tradition.

[17] The concepts of praxis and shared praxis will be explored in a later discussion of theological reflection based on Groome's use in Christian education (1980, 135–206), and Browning's methodology in "strategic practical theology" (1991, 55–74).

> emphasis on reflective or theoretical knowing at the expense of practical or active knowing (1996, 182).[18]

Researchers can protect the balance between theoretical knowing and practical knowing by altering the power relationship between investigator and respondents. The agenda for research into the developing literature review was set by the themes emerging from the data. They had been member checked for validity and triangulated.[19] Via these themes, "the subjects of research now play a role in carrying out the research" as their voice encounters tradition and culture (Robson 1993, 23).

As the study developed into a case study exploration of the surrounding influences, Kinast's summarising description of the dynamics and sequence of praxis was relevant.

> ... transformation of systems, policies and official practices is always possible, but it is not the primary or only intended outcome of theological reflection. Rather the goal of praxis is to realise what reflection makes possible. For theological reflection this is never determined ahead of time. It grows out of the originating experience, critically correlated with the faith tradition and skilfully put into practice. That's not just what the theologians are saying - it is also what the Christian faithful are doing (2000, 71).

The Christian faithful at Aspendale were present in the emerging themes that continued to be analysed, through the literature review, in the context of the theory and praxis of the tradition. Kinast reflects two pioneers of qualitative research who claimed that grounded theory

> ... is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 22).

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[18] Veling alludes to Groome's tracing of the notion of praxis to Aristotle's concept of three ways of knowing. For Aristotle the dynamic interaction between *praxis* (the practical life), *theoria* (the speculative life), and *poiesis* (the productive life) always highlighted the primacy of *theoria.* Groome, indicating that for Aristotle the activity of God must be expressed in a form of contemplation, suggests that he " is also at least partly responsible for what later came to be an assumed dichotomy between theory and praxis ... For him *theoria* is also the most ideal of the three lives" (1980, 156).

The Aspendale study affirms that theological reflection is a skill being used by the "Christian faithful" who act as researchers, parish planners, priests and lay ecclesial ministers. In qualitative inquiry there need be no hierarchy of knowing. Instead there is not only a reciprocal relationship between data collection, analysis and theory there is also a reciprocal relationship between the emerging theory and the theologically reflective process of the literature survey. The researcher is taken on an exploratory journey where the tentative itinerary is set by emergent themes.

A practical theologian's definition of the research parameters of a case study might begin with a question: How do we understand this concrete situation?

> This goes beyond the ... general features of the situation that systematic theology would address. It entails questions about this concrete situation in all its particularity ... the special histories, commitments, and needs of the agents in the situation ... the interplay of institutional systems and how they converge on the situation ... analysis of the religio-cultural narratives and histories that compete to define and give meaning to the situation (Browning 1991, 55).[20]

While data-analysis took systematic and dogmatic theology into account, such textures do not form a large part of the report even though the focus is on lay ecclesial ministry, collaborative ministry and ordained/lay themes. The research took a wide-angled lens approach to Browning's question ("How do we understand this concrete situation?"), and explored the "interplay of institutional systems" influencing the initiation of the project and the "religio-cultural narratives and histories" that determined its early termination. The practical theologian therefore complements the social scientist when the latter claims that case study "is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake 1995, xi). The two perspectives offer a synchronicity that describes my experience of researching an "activity within important circumstances." The focus shifted from the micro context of four years of Aspendale to the macro context of over 40 years (and

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[19] Later discussion of internal and external validity outlines the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Glaser (1992).

[20] For Browning the "concrete" actions of a Christian community are theological. They are full of meaning and values (1991, 34–54). Steve Taylor comments that "Browning utilised the concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom that informs action) rather than *theories* (theoretical reason) or *techne* (technical reason) to argue for practical theology as an exegesis of the embodied theory intrinsic to the life of a church community" (2003, 6).

2000 years of tradition) of wrestling with lay ecclesial ministry and priesthood. It was more of an emerging journey than a mapped itinerary. Stake describes this journey as a process of organising data-collection, reviewing documents and reporting around an issue and its research questions. The lines of definition may constantly move, and the literature review may constantly expand. However, these activities can invite researchers to reconsider the original issues as new ones emerge.

> Case study work is often said to be 'progressively focused' (the organising concepts change somewhat as the study moves along). Usually it will be important to seek out and present multiple perspectives of activities and issues, discovering and portraying the different views. Seldom will it be necessary to resolve contradictory testimony or competing values - any of them may help us understand the case (Stake 1995, 134).

The "contradictory testimony or competing values" and the "multiple perspectives of activities and issues" find a natural home both in the literature review and in the analysis of data as lived experiences intersect, not always comfortably, with the faith tradition at all levels of inquiry.[21] This case study therefore takes research beyond the general features that systematic theology addresses and places data, analysis and theological reflection in a reciprocal relationship with each other and the wider context. This exploratory journey then generates more questions from the data (Chapter Three) and proposes further areas of research (Chapter Six).

2.2.6 Grounded theory and the People of God as living texts

Denham Grierson's research on Australian parishes indicated that an empirical starting point carries with it

> an assumption about how the action of God is to be discerned. Following Gabriel Moran, the starting point of revelation is the personal, relational, social and practical experience of people. The conclusion of Thomas Groome is also important. 'The purpose of naming our present and knowing our story is that we may have some freedom to imagine and choose our future' (1984, 93).[22]

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[21] There exists between lived experience and the faith tradition "a dialectical relationship and a critical correlation - and in the case of feminist and inculturation styles of theological reflection, a hermeneutics of suspicion" (Kinast 2000, 67).

[22] Grierson's congregational research has six categories - time, space, language, intimacy, consensus and circumstance (6). The process of naming and interpreting develops important insights but the common

Grierson cites Groome who writes that

> critical reflection on present action (praxis), the exercise of creative imagination is an expression of hope ... Critical reflection engages both the rational and affective capacities of the human person (1980, 186–187).

It is important to ensure that "affective capacities," the passion, commitment and spirituality of participants are valued and documented. These factors add colour, individuality and content to Veling's contention that just as theory and action go together so too "knowing and being cannot be separated" (1995, 182). This is a living case study where the hopes and dreams, frustration and confusion of priests and bishops, lay leaders and canon lawyers are essential elements. Given the limitations of religion in deciding in detail the nature of the individual condition in relationship to the whole, it is Moran's belief "that the whole and the personal are permanent values" and are "the basic experience which religions ought to sustain and cultivate" (1972, 223). This study sought to comprehend and analyse "the whole," that is, the Catholic experience of lay ministry and leadership in the context of diminishing numbers of priests. It sought to affirm and give a voice to "the personal" within a framework of religious faith and pastoral ministerial identity. That voice must be heard from deep within the very structures and layers that, for a number of reasons, may threaten to silence it. Grierson employs a dynamic metaphor to describe how some of the insights from the people of Aspendale set the pattern for the journey of inquiry.

> The life of a congregation flows on, however it may be contained within the broad banks it has cut for itself. Whether it flows faster and cuts deeper, or redirects its resources over a broader area never before travelled, it must continue to move forward or decry its very being (1984, 122).

This report, as an exercise in practical theology, sought to enable the story of one congregation to make a contribution to the life of the whole and locate it on the broad canvas of the Catholic Church.[23] Practical theology is committed to interpreting sacred texts and traditions alongside the interpretation of lived experience. The researcher or

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thread that connects these categories is the spiritual dimension behind Grierson's question: "What forms, sustains and shapes a faith community"?

[23] Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus affirms unity within the body and the unique contribution of each part. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord,

theological reflector enables dialogue between related sources (Fuellenbach 2002, 104–107). "Text" can take a number of forms and Kathleen Cahalan claims that

> ... we often think of theologians interpreting written texts from the past, but in the case of practical theology we are talking about interpreting what I would call the living text of human lives and faith communities ... Human persons are being described not in some static, essentialist way by practical theologians, but as living, embodied, community-creating beings (2005, 92–92).

This helps to avoid the clerical paradigm if for no other reason than the fact that the vast number of living, breathing texts are lay people.

2.3 Grounded Theory and Theological Reflection

This study explored an experimental model of parish leadership. As noted earlier, grounded theory offers an approach where theory can be inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents since the researcher does not "begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin 1999, 22). Four basic criteria govern grounded theory. They work in concert so that emerging theories (or theology) can have shape and validity. Strauss and Corbin describe these concepts as: "fit ... understanding ... generality ... control" (1990, 23). They will be discussed in conversation with texts on theological reflection, in particular Kinast's *Let Ministry Teach* (1996).[24]

The concept of "control" will be explained as a separate but validating thread throughout the discussion of the first three criteria. Since any hypotheses proposing relationships between concepts are systematically derived from actual data related to that (and only that) phenomenon, the research methodology should provide control (validity) with regard to any action toward the phenomenon, be it data collection, analysis or generation of theory. This is comparable to Lincoln and Guba's two factors of

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one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4: 4–7).

[24] Even the title, *Let Ministry Teach*, evokes an image of education that is grounded in pastoral practice. Patterns emerge as the basis for reflection and potential theory/theology but, for Kinast, an "important thing to remember about theological reflection is that it is action-oriented and often change-oriented" (1996, viii). This is consistent with grounded theory where the dynamic relationship between "concepts, especially categories, properties and dimensions, are sometimes interchangeable" (Grbich 1999, 179).

dependability and confirmability and is critical to the validity of any study (1985). The data and the developing themes need to make sense throughout to all those involved. Evidence of control and validity-claims appear throughout the discussion of the first three criteria because practical theology "must support its implicit validity claims if it takes part in the discourse of a free society aimed at shaping the common good" (Browning 1991, 71). Browning cites Richard Bernstein's claim (1983, 163) that we "never escape from the obligation of seeking to validate claims to truth through argumentation and opening ourselves to the criticism of others" (70). For this reason, concepts such as triangulation, internal and external validation and member checking appear throughout this chapter. As an additional safeguard, there is a rationale for the role and person of the researcher in participant observation.

2.3.1 Fit

When emerging theory is faithful to the everyday reality of the subject area and carefully induced from diverse data, then it should fit that subject area. This corresponds to Lincoln and Guba's concept of credibility or trustworthiness, where a demonstrated recognition indicates appropriate and consistent logic (1985). Kinast introduces a complementary phase of reflection: "That Reminds Me: Theological Reflection as Illustration" (1996, 68–94). He asks strategic questions that initiate a journey of reflection: "Does that sound like your situation? Does this experience remind you of anything similar?" The person then begins to enter fruitful territory because they have

> ... already accumulated a store of experiences, impressions, feelings, intuitions, thoughts, learnings, questions, doubts, insights and convictions. Much of this is rightly called pre-reflexive or pre-thematic, meaning that it isn't always explicit and hasn't been analysed or critically thought out and put into coherent order. But it's already there (70).

Kinast's question looks for the familiar, or to use Lincoln and Guba's word, that which "fits". When researchers discover, as analysis proceeds, that the issue, the topic or the theory is "already there" then fit has been established. The strategy of member checking also performs a validating role (Guba and Lincoln 1981, 110–111; Robson 1993, 404),[25]

[25] "Fit" is part of a suite of validity techniques (Robson 1993, 404).

that is complementary to Kinast's theologically-orientated frame of questioning. A qualitative researcher will claim that "checking with those from whom the data are derived, gets to the heart of credibility; if they believe the findings from their several perspectives, it is tautologically credible" (Robson 1993, 404). The alternative description of this process, "face validity", conveys the more human and empowering dimension of face to face dialogue as interpretations are checked with individuals or focus groups (Grbich 1999, 62). The "already there" criterion can also be readily applied to data or theory from similar research contexts, experiments or experiences within the wider Church. This happened as the literature review was expanded and analysis of the wider context developed. Discovering 'fit' tends to form a community of reflection that can also include the literature review.

One of the first steps in theological reflection is to describe an experience and begin to look for familiar and recognisable themes or images with which to explore meaning.[26] A "thick description" for those working with the interpretation of cultures (Geertz 1973) and the interpretation of data (Denzin 1989), is ideally both comprehensive and selective. It is comprehensive in that it "specifies everything that a reader may need to know to understand the findings" (Robson 1995, 405).[27] It is selective in that the first reader (the constructor or composer) of the description is the researcher. The principle of relativity is inherent to a qualitative case study, particularly when the researcher exercises a process of theological reflection. Browning's explanation of "descriptive theology" suggests a comprehensive approach where cultural

- Prolonged involvement. The researcher was involved with Aspendale from 1996-1999.
- Persistent observation. Attendance at daily events, special liturgies, business meetings and school classes brought depth as the literature expanded and other insights informed observation and assisted interpretation.
- Triangulation. This has been referred to already.
- Peer debriefing. This happened through supervision and seminar presentations. I was still involved in parish leadership so conversations with the Lay Parish Leader had aspects of peer debriefing as feelings and situations were normalised.
- Member checks - transcripts and emerging themes were discussed with subjects. This still had to be checked with external data sources for fit.

[26] It is also important to note the corollary, unfamiliar and unrecognisable themes or images. Whatever does not fit might become the source of an alternative explanation, new theory or different theological perspective.

[27] For Robson the "findings themselves are not part of the thick description," they are linked through the process of analysis (1993, 405). They must be separated clearly if "construct validity" (multiple sources of data and member checking) and "internal validity" (pattern matching, explanation building, and evaluation of rival explanations in analysis) are to be preserved (Yin 2003a, 34).

and social anthropology blend with psychology, ecology and sociology to enable the researcher to access the concreteness or "the thickness of practice" (1991, 111). While a researcher may use the human and social sciences, "descriptive theology uses these special foci within an explicit and critically grounded theological horizon" (112). The social scientist claims that each "researcher contributes uniquely to the study of a case" and then has to exercise some form of critical judgment to "deliberately or intuitively, make role choices" about the nature of that contribution (Stake 1995, 103).[28] The role of the interpreter and gatherer of interpretations actually begins with the choice of "what" and "how much" to include in the description. Stake sees this as a factual record and an attempt to "establish an empathic understanding ... conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey" (39). This creatively overlaps with theological reflection. For Kinast, the purpose of description is to

> re-present the event and make it available to those who are going to reflect on it. In order for them to learn from the experience, it is important that they make the experience their own; that is, they must enter it (1996, 42).

This study assumes that the researcher (who describes and analyses), and the theological reflector (who seeks meaning for self and others), are one and the same person. Feminist researchers have long rejected a traditional understanding of objectivity that separates the knower and the known. They have supported the visibility of a clearly defined researcher who is identified as a resource rather than a contaminant (Krieger 1991). Marjorie DeVault offers a note of caution.

> Precisely how to use and locate the self most effectively remains unresolved. However, the demand for accountability can be seen as the rationale for experiments with autobiographical and dialogic modes of presenting research ... as well as a thread that connects them to projects that are more traditional in format (1999, 41).

These connecting threads maintain credibility by allowing the emerging findings and theories to become a form of internal validity as they dialogue with rival explanations

[28] Stake presents the choices: how much to participate personally in the activity of the case; how much comprehension to reveal; whether to be a neutral observer or evaluative, critical analyst; how much to serve the needs of the anticipated readers; how much to provide interpretations about the case; how much to advocate a position; and whether or not to tell it as a story (103).

from alternative methodologies. Similarly the Aspendale data and findings guided the inquiry into a wider field of research and methodologies.[29]

The word "fit" is not commonly used in practical theology, but there is a cognitive, emotional and experiential "joining" with the issue or context through theological reflection.[30] "Joining is about 'tuning-in' or 'being on the same wavelength' as someone else" or focusing on some emerging insight or theory that makes sense to participants" (Geldard and Geldard 2001, 32). Face validity assumes a commitment to listening and reflective skills in the researcher. However, there is another level of dialogue that has to be reached to determine fit since all research has a degree of cross-cultural influence and, as someone outside the Catholic tradition I certainly felt this. Augsburger uses the concept of "interpathy" in cross-cultural pastoral counselling to describe

> an intentional cognitive envisioning and affective experiencing of another's thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts and feelings rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions (1986, 29).

Qualitative research and theological reflection have much in common but it is in the hands of the researcher as to whether or not they combine effectively in a particular study. For Augsberger an authentic sense of fit will only move on to accurate understanding if the counsellor (or researcher) is "culturally aware, interpathically skilled, and authentically present in dialogue with persons of other cultures, values and faiths" (372). He is describing the task of the inter-cultural pastoral counsellor but these factors are essential elements for accurate engagement with people, data and analysis. In fact they are essential for pastoral ministry and pastoral formation.[31]

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[29] Qualitative methodologies can build theory that can then be tested using quantitative methods. See Berg for a description of ways in which the two approaches can be synchronised (1995, 174–199).

[30] "Joining" is not used in the therapeutic or counselling sense. In this context it is used with listening and understanding as the goals. This is not merely a cognitive or intellectual exercise. It requires genuine empathy with the subject and/or the context. Joining involves greeting, observing, putting at ease, invitation to talk, and tuning in. This complements the relational use of listening skills during data collection, analysis and interpretation.

[31] Consider topics and ecumenical texts in pastoral care and ministry formation over the past two decades.

- Intercultural listening and reflection (Augsburger 1986; Wilson et al 1996; Lartey 1997; Pembroke 2004).
- Authentic presence through helping/listening skills (Kennedy and Charles 1990; Jacobs 1993; Moran 1996; Wicks and Rodgerson 1998).

Researchers are constantly working with persons of other cultures, values and faith experiences and the methodology must be sensitive to this. I disagree with Strauss's suggestion that, in trying to give emerging themes full value, a traditional variable such as race–ethnicity must "earn [its] way into the grounded theory" that is developing (1987, 32). The Aspendale study gave full value to influential and culturally powerful variables such as lay/ordained (as a form of class), gender (as a pre–requisite for particular roles) or Magisterium (as perceived authority). They were taken into account because they actually emerge in peoples' experience. Dorothy Smith's concept of "institutional ethnography" (1987) was helpful in framing this interpretive task both in analysing data and in evaluating the growing body of literature the analysis was generating. DeVault used this institutional ethnographic approach in a study on health workers that was

> concerned with illuminating the organising contexts that shape their activity - the positions constructed for them as professionals and the opportunities and constraints these positions provide (1999, 86).

As themes began to emerge it was important to trace the recognisable development of these themes (fit) amidst the patterns of authority and power and the nuances of theological understanding of Catholic ministry, lay and ordained. Theological reflection was therefore an integral part of discovering fresh ways of interpreting familiar, emergent constructs such as lay/ordained or Magisterium and authority. The researcher and the subject (or the authors who were part of the literature review) also used Scripture or experience to revisit and critique these worldwide influences within the Catholic Church.

This is not quite the same as asking the question: What is local and what is global? Practical theology must always revisit how it defines local. Steve Taylor's research on a Baptist Church in Auckland led him to explore the many "twists and turns of religious history in New Zealand," and he notes that "Cityside became a fine case study of New Zealand religious life over time and in a changing context" (2003, 14). It also gave him a new toolkit of interdisciplinary skills to engage in an

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- Integration of pastoral care/listening skills with theological reflection (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Stone 1996; Kinast 1996; Bridger and Atkinson 1998).

> analysis of popular culture, cultural studies and understanding of the processes of globalisation ... while working with the reality of globalisation and a more nuanced understanding of the local" (14–15).

Aspendale data led to the twists and turns of Australian religious history and became a case study of Catholic religious life over time and in a changing context. This parish was not immune from any of the powerful and seemingly global influences of the Catholic world, and Catholic teaching became a dominant theme. In resolving the tension of "local as local, and local as global" Taylor, following John Swinton, did not allow the local to disappear "into the broad sweep of the global" but rather, "prioritise[d] individual human experience, while working with the reality of globalisation and a more nuanced understanding of the local" (14–15). Swinton's emphasis on the subject's human experience and the intensity of the researcher's concrete engagement with that experience adds authenticity to Taylor's research. Without that encounter there is no reflection at all. Citing Swinton, Taylor notes that this allows "a critical reflection on the practice of the Church in the world" (2000, 11). Fit can therefore become the active link to theological conversation with the wider Church. In precisely this way the themes from the Aspendale data became prompts and indicators for wider reading, analysis and interpretation and the study became a critical reflection on the experience of one parish in the context of the Catholic Church. Schreiter's question helped to define this tension and guide the methodology towards discovering where fit was moving towards understanding.

> In the midst of cultural diversity, and the sensitivity needed to the presence of Christ already in the culture, how does one also respect the normative character of Christian tradition (1986, 101)?

2.3.2 Understanding

Because an emerging theory or cluster of themes represents a reality and now seems to fit that reality, it should be comprehensible. It should make sense in a way that can be articulated more explicitly and more widely than a theory that just seems to fit. This is true for subjects, researchers and others practising in the area under study. This study used a dialogical and cognitive approach to data and literature review so that understanding of emerging themes could develop accurately. Jürgen Habermas' theory

of communicative competence claims that all communication should have the ability to provide a rationale for one's theory or for the validity of that theory and to be able to do so even with those who have differing views (1970; 1979). Habermas uses four terms to describe how communicative competence can establish validity. Comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness combine to set up a pattern of dialogue that offers mutuality, equal power, respect and creativity (1979, 57–58). This fourfold basis for validity prepares the ground for "generality" (or generalisability), the next major concept of grounded theory that we will seek to integrate with theological reflection. Generality is also described as "external validity" and can be defined as the ability of a theory to stand and find common ground in the company of other theory (Grbich 1999, 130–131). Kelty comments on Jacques Audinet's (1999) appeal for dialogue with contemporary human sciences and anthropology, and pinpoints the logical, emancipating and liberating goal expressed by Habermas.

> If Audinet's assessment is correct, there is then a pressing need still for theologians to become more aware of the social sciences, especially sociology and psychology ... There was no great urgency especially when the sacramental life of the Church was so vital. In a different climate, sacramental renewal alone will not suffice. The attitudinal change demanded in a time of enormous cultural shift is contained in those praxis theologies which enable the whole faithful to take the initiative by living reflectively (2004, 129).

Browning also claims that fundamental practical theology should provide a reasonable basis for dialogue with those who do not even share the same faith presuppositions. Given that the activities of the Church take place in society, ("the whole faithful"), and have a reciprocal influence upon it, "practical theology should go further and enter a public and critical discourse about the validity claims supporting its practice" (1991, 68). This study adopts this approach but also affirms Browning's earlier careful revisiting of Seward Hiltner's (1958) ecclesiastical and pastoral paradigm of practical theology where essential beliefs and traditions are open to a critique of contemporary pastoral practice and experience (1987; 1991). For Browning, practical theology should address contemporary life in a way that is not limited to the Church's traditional understanding of its pastoral role. However he still wishes to operate within the parameters of Christian

narratives, symbols, issues and practices, a position adopted by this study.[32] Augsburger's allied concept of interpathy affirms that the art of reflective, empathic listening can become the basis for the bridge to another human experience. In the pastoral therapeutic domain, rapport provides a connection that can link "the islands of awareness of two human beings" (Clinebell 1984, 75). When this occurs, a pastoral psychologist such as Frances Moran describes the focal point or purpose of the listening process as the "recognition of the importance of our ability to question and to search for knowledge ..." (1996, 129). Praxis demands that new knowledge be tested, probed and explored in deeper ways if understanding is to develop from fit. How does this relate to theological reflection? Kinast answers this question in his next step: "Now I Begin to See". This phrase alludes to the growing ability to think through new knowledge or theory and, as evidence that it has been understood, it can be applied with tentative imagination to a particular context (1996, 95–122). Familiarity with theory or theology (fit) moves on to application, that is, the ability to work flexibly and creatively with new theory. Kelty critiques the view that sees practical theology

> as the delivery system for theology proper ... Sadly this reductionism has tended to prevail in many Catholic theological circles. The notion that one simply needs a good theory (theology) which can be applied in a wide variety of situations, neglects that practical thinking itself generates ideas (2004, 126).

Kinast rejects the idea that the technique of application is the same as putting theology (theory) into practice. Application is still an embryonic step and is therefore a mode of rethinking one's theology from the perspective of a new situation.

> This entails the likelihood of modifying one's theology ... and adapting one's theology from its customary context of abstract thought to the novel context of a particular situation (1996, 97).

A parallel step in grounded theory occurs when understanding is at a particularly fluid, liminal or intermediate phase where former beliefs have been suspended and new theory is in the process of taking shape.

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[32] Gordon Lynch goes beyond this, building on Stephen Pattison's (1997) model of practical theology that engages belief systems and practices that fall outside these parameters. He argues for a "post–religious" practical theology that "separate[s] Browning's understanding of practical theology from an explicitly religious understanding of this discipline to make it accessible to a wider range of people who want to

I teach a seminar on "Pastoral Care, Worship and Ritual." One goal is to identify the liminal moment in a ritual, that strangely energised point of suspension where one has disengaged or separated from the community prior to reincorporating in a changed state.[33] Victor Turner describes liminality as a mediating device between two sign systems (1976).[34] This introduces the possibility of a liminal phase (Kinast's "application") of theological reflection that can be integrated with understanding on the way to generality in grounded theory. For Arnold Van Gennep ritual not only has meaning but also "works", indicating that the ritual or process has been effective (1960). Something has changed, moved, matured or healed and the ceremonies, rites and services are the main instruments of transformation. In the same way I believe that theological reflection offers a dynamic but liminal process where "religion is a praxis, a certain way of acting or attempting to act in the world" (Driver 1991, 169). Theological reflection therefore has a ritual tone. Van Gennep claims that practice and theory are inseparable because "the theory without the practice becomes metaphysics, and the practice on the basis of a different theory becomes science" (1960, 13). Effective theological reflection is prepared to suspend judgment and wait for something new to emerge that forms a bridge between theory and practice. There is a liminal moment where understanding is forming and taking shape with the potential to move to generality. This creates a liberating space or point of suspension where we can be more open and active, in a reflective sense, about engaging theory or theology that is under review. The different modes of performance in the ritual process often attract attention but it is the potential for change and growth in this moment of liminality that hints at what Driver calls "transformance" (1991, 94). A minimalist idea of ritual as performance alerts us to the danger of being closed to new meaning that is not part of the current script. Driver goes deeper than simply offering a summary of shifts in rites of passage where there is a change of status or identity such as where the single, unwed person becomes married or where the layperson becomes clerical. He allocates

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think critically about what it means to live in morally and spiritually healthy ways in a contemporary world" (2003, 25–26).

[33] This unfamiliar moment, not necessarily religious, can have many faces. The boy-scout comes forward to be invested with a new rank or the retiree steps forward to receive a gift, makes a brief speech and then leaves the work community.

[34] Turner's work in ritual and liminality has been used widely by liturgical writers. He uses Arnold Van Gennep's earlier anthropological work on rites of passage (1960).

transformance to those rituals where participants become aware of ontological change and moral or spiritual cleansing through rituals such as prayer or Eucharist (95). Driver describes the link from ritual process and liminality to theological reflection. Since religious practice and theory go hand in hand, this reminds us

> that religion cannot be religion without performance, in all the senses of "performance" that we have earlier elaborated. The aim of religion is not simply intellectual understanding; it is also, and primarily, transformative action (169).

Driver developed the concept of transformance from a more instrumental definition coined by Richard Schechner (1977; 1985). Schechner and Willa Appel argue that in theatre-craft, performers go through a deconstruction/reconstruction process to effect transformation of self and they identify this movement with Turner's ritual process. Driver disagrees (1991, 248, f/n 229). I concur with Driver. There is a contained aspect to the process of an actor engaging and becoming a character and then returning to their own identity. I see it as a performance "bubble" containing transformance modes. In theological reflection (and ritual) the horizon or limit of vision and experience is not limited by a script even though I can, of course, choose an old script and return to it. True liminality holds the risk and the promise, the fear and the tension of growth and change. The same is true for theological reflection and grounded theory in the move from understanding to generality. Moral or spiritual shifts can imply shifts in theory or theology (and vice versa) where intellectual understanding, or grasping of possibilities, stand on the threshold (*limen*) of change. The potential of this liminal moment corresponds to Kinast's concept of application. This involves "determining how much of one's theology (theory) is relevant to the situation as it actually occurred, which elements are relevant and which are not" and if

> an experience confirms one's theological understanding with virtually no variation, the learning is an illustration. If an experience causes a person to rethink, alter or modify one's theology, [then] the learning is an application (1996, 120).

There is therefore a progression of thought and practice. Recognition of an illustration may follow description but then the "illustration must be described, studied,

analysed and discussed" before taking hold of the theological imagination and becoming understanding (89). Illustration therefore corresponds to fit, and application corresponds to understanding. Fit (illustration) moves sequentially to understanding (application). The first two concepts that govern grounded theory, fit and understanding, are therefore two stages of meaning-making that are essential and sequential components of validity in a world where data and theory are not adequate on their own. Browning's method of practical theology that "enhances critical discourse in conflictive and pluralistic modern societies" (1991, 71) must also be used dialogically and relationally. Just as Augsburger's interpathic dialogue requires both "feeling with" and "thinking with" the researcher can go further by entering the other person's

> world of assumptions, beliefs, and values and temporarily take them as one's own. Bracketing my own beliefs, I believe what the other believes, see as the other sees, value what the other values and feel the consequent feelings as the other feels them (Augsburger 1986, 30–31).

This is not just a researcher's technique or a counsellor's skill, it is a basic tool of pastoral ministry. The Whiteheads' concept of "bracketing" one's own beliefs, in order to listen and attend, is a "ministerial asceticism" based on the kenotic aspect of Philippians 2: 7 where Christ "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (1995, 67–75). Their earlier work notes that such a spirituality is exercised in prayer and "in the specific learned behaviours through which we can more effectively empty ourselves of our own agenda" as we engage in theological reflection (1980, 88). Augsburger explores the "joining and listening" therapeutic domain but his methodological rationale also illustrates the task of the researcher as a theologically reflective practitioner who collects and analyses data. If I were to substitute "research" for "counselling training" Augsberger's statement would sound very familiar.

> Most counselling training (research) is grounded in empiricism or phenomenology. Either approach focuses on observable phenomena that are replicable, measurable and definable by either naturalistic observation or objective self-description" (1986, 32).

There are limitations to this analogy but Augsburger's next point is critical for the Aspendale study or indeed, any context that is not one's own. When it comes to dealing with a faith tradition, beliefs and long-held theologies of ministry and practice "[n]either

approach offers a useful perspective on mystic, cultic, folk religious and commonly believed perspectives that shape many cultures" (32). Interpathy therefore provided a helpful concept for me as a researcher and affirmed previous training in pastoral theology. The corollary is also true. When people name and own a private world and then seek to impose it on others or refuse to enter their world, it will not become a place of dialogue, a source of reflection or a basis for data analysis.

2.3.3 From understanding to generality

To determine understanding, the researcher must also be prepared to be free enough to listen within a different cosmology. Paul Dokecki, Bob Newbrough and Robert O'Gorman are community psychologists researching Catholic parishes in the United States. They suggest that movement towards authentic community requires a new story.

> The Catholic Church's rich tradition still reflects a restricted cosmology, which, in turn, restricts full human development of all its members, perhaps especially women. Its cosmology reflects an outmoded scientific understanding. One result is that the institutional Catholic Church has not undergone its own creative liberation and thus fails to offer authentic liberty to its members (1996, 46).[35]

In the move from understanding to generality it matters little if their assessment is true or not, or whether the researcher has the same cosmology or an entirely different one. The task requires firstly the discernment of properly validated themes, and secondly, the researcher must work out how they are interpreted and understood within the cosmology.[36] If the link with the cosmology is a dialogical one there will probably be evidence of the ability to modify or adapt and then move on to generality. If not, then the emerging theory may remain locked or frozen by the cosmology. Sometimes the dialogical link may result in a return to the original theory. The researcher, like the supervisor in a theological reflection exercise, is looking for the dialogical links rather than particular conclusions.[37] DeVault highlights the need for this practical link in the

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[35] This could also apply to a parish within my own, or any, tradition.

[36] Consider feudal patterns of authority (Cozzens 2004, 12–24), lay and gender issues where status is assigned or where power abuse is unrecognised (Kimmerling 1986; Chopp 1987; 1991), and hierarchies of value with respect to lay and ordained (Costelloe 1998; 2005).

[37] For example I may work pastorally with someone whose cosmology is based upon the concept of spiritual warfare, a concept I do not personally own. They see the illness they have or the redundancy

chain of theory-building. Of course it can work two ways and the worldview or presuppositions of the researcher can distort their perspective. She notes the frustration she felt towards a particular class who were highly sensitive to racism but so focused on racial issues that they entirely missed the main point of a case study that outlined research on disability. She still had lingering impatience as she wrote about her students' "programmatic" highjacking of the analysis.

> ... my general point is both moral and intellectual: it involves listening carefully and respectfully, and remaining open to unexpected points of view. Good listening, in my view, is a moral value ... a strategy for avoiding the dangers of narrow adherence to a theoretical program. I would not dismiss the essential (and inevitable, even if unacknowledged) role of theory in empirical work; but it is helpful to remember that sometimes, in addition to usefully directing attention, theoretical commitments can serve as blinders ... (1999, 223).

De Vault, the sociologist with a focus on gender and disability issues, echoes the interpathic claims of Augsberger the pastoral psychotherapist with a focus on missiology. Theory and theology can block the journey towards understanding. A genuinely grounded theology that can sustain the rigours of reflection does not come from the outside and it is not imposed. Kinast's statement from the application phase, "now I begin to see", indicates that the theological meaning of a situation comes from within and can have spiritual, moral, liturgical and practical implications because it must be owned (1996, 103–104). The similarities between DeVault and Augsberger find practical expression when Kinast supplies the final piece of this eclectic, interpretive jigsaw before we move on to the third phase of grounded theory, generality. Generality invites us to imagine and then construct a scenario (or scenarios) for a new-found theory or theological perspective. Kinast suggests that the stimulus for these scenarios can come from any of three sources that resemble the elements of a drama or a play. This is a relevant metaphor for a case study involving interpathy. The researcher must choose to enter the other's stage or worldview made up of:

- **the players** who may break stereotypes, reverse roles or display hidden qualities;

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suffered by their spouse as the work of Satan challenging their faith and this 'attack' can be overcome by the superior power of God and all that attaches to discipleship. My first task is to hear the story of life within that script or on that stage and then try to understand life as they see and experience it. Later I may discover that they are challenging or exploring the cosmology that determines their responses and thought processes but first I must be prepared to suspend my own world view in order to listen/interpret effectively. This is another dimension of bracketing.

- **the plot** which depends on mythologies, terminology or scripts, methodology or theory application and dénouements or outcomes;
- **the place**, where the setting displays a particular cultural, political/sexual or social character (Kinast 1996, 100–104).

During data analysis this format was used to help break down transcripts, a form of axial coding that involved a search through "the empirical data, the researcher's life knowledge and experience, and her/his theoretical and research literature knowledge, in order to develop an expanded category" (Grbich 1999, 176).

Each of Kinast's theatrical categories provided a helpful structure for reflection on the Aspendale data. Categories emerging from clusters of key words and phrases were integrated with data from library research. Data was initially classified using this paradigm. Analysis then used Patton's process of inductive analysis where "the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data: they emerge out of the data rather than being decided prior to data collection and analysis" (1987, 150). I then linked this to the discipline of theological reflection that has a similar focus to axial coding. For Kinast, theological reflection provides the opportunity either to reaffirm or rearrange our theology or to initiate the apprehension of a new theology. There is life and vitality within this process but also what Tracy calls

> the risk that any human being thus involved must take: the risk that the involvement itself, if authentic, will transform one's ordinary (and possibly alienated) modes of acting and knowing (1983, 14).

Whenever we bring theory and experience into a critically correlational process, Tracy describes this process as a revisionist correlational model of theology. Christian texts (or theory) and common human experience or language, become two major players. He sees the process as one where theory is sublated into praxis and,

> theories of theological truth ... are sublated into a transformation model whereby the theologian, involved in and committed to transforming a particular praxis situation, may find some truthful way of functioning (14).

My only "truthful way of functioning" was to become a participant-observer who then moved into a parallel process of theological reflection based on the emergent themes. Prompted by these themes, I engaged the much wider and more comprehensive

experience of lay ministry in the Catholic Church. The Whiteheads describe common human experience as a component in theological reflection and admit that this amorphous term signifies "the personal experience of the minister and the collective experience of the community in which the reflection is taking place" (1980, 12). Kinast's player, plot and place are given a sharper focus if we separate common human experience into three poles where

> (1) interpretations of the practices, inner motivations, and socio-cultural history of individual agents; (2) interpretations of relevant institutional patterns and practices and; (3) interpretations of the cultural and religious symbols ... give meaning to individual and institutional action (Browning 1991, 61).

Browning's three poles offered a more accessible pattern of interpretation and they were used in conjunction with Kinast's theatre metaphor to assist the transition to generality.[38]

2.3.4 Generality

If the data upon which theory is based are comprehensive and the interpretations conceptual and broad, then the theory should be abstract enough and include sufficient variation to make it relevant to a variety of contexts related to that phenomenon. This corresponds to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) factor of transferability, a construct that corresponds to external validity or generalisability in traditional quantitative research (Robson, 1993, 404). Of necessity, there are some limitations as to how broadly applicable the findings will be. For some researchers this approach seems so "messy" and even out of the control of the researcher.[39] However, "in our search both for accuracy and alternative explanations we need discipline, we need protocols which do not depend on mere intuition and good intention to get it right" (Stake 1995, 107). Life is messy, people are messy, churches are messy and researchers are messy but rigour and discipline bring validity to interpretation. Stake's "multiple perspectives" become validity concepts as do various forms of triangulation. A "major strength of case study

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[38] Browning valued the contribution of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to theological education. The poles allude to the complexity of what Anton Boisen called the "human document" in the context of biblical and theological texts (1936). CPE placed seminary students in hospital settings. Supervision focused on the experience and the person of the student in his or her relationship to the patient.

[39] A colleague in Supervised Theological Field Education developed his own method of reflection. He adapted the models of the Whiteheads (1995) and Killen and de Beer (1994) and called it *Colin's Messy Model* (Hunter 2002).

data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" (Yin 2003a, 97).

Multiple sources of evidence around the case study are covered in the literature review and enable the researcher to include a range of historical, ideological, and behavioural issues. In addition, various types of triangulation are used as corroborating strategies in this report. "Triangulation in surveying is a method of finding out where something is by getting a 'fix' on it from two or more places" (Robson 1995, 290), or where "several readings of exactly the same kind, but from different positions, are taken in order to locate 'truth'" (Grbich 1999, 61). There are four basic types and some or all may be used (Patton 1987; Denzin 1988):

- Data-source triangulation. Interviews, focus groups and document study were used in this project.
- Investigator triangulation. A variety of researchers were not formally used but supervision and peer presentations fulfilled this purpose.
- Theory triangulation. Different perspectives on the same data emerged through a constant process of theological reflection that required the suspension of theological presuppositions (Kinast 1996).[40]
- Methodological triangulation. Some limited quantitative methods were employed in questionnaires.

There must also be an accurate thick description that Stake would bluntly describe as assuring "the reader that [the researcher] can see straight and think straight" and that also enables fit to be conceivable (1995, 10–11). Understanding must allow emerging theory to be generalised, but "any generalisability claimed will be logical rather than statistical", and "specific to the group when it is researched in a particular context" (Grbich 1999, 94).[41] Grbich's statement seems paradoxical given the apparent tension between "generalisability" and "specific" but the key is in the other point of tension between "logical" and "statistical." Case studies may be generalised to theoretical propositions rather than to particular populations or identifiable universes.

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[40] Kinast's concept of "application" allows "the likelihood of modifying one's theology" (1996, 97), and this in turn allows alternative explanations that may "come together to form a new pattern and give a more adequate account of experience - it is called a paradigm shift" (127).

[41] The literature review explored constructs similar to those found at Aspendale such as lay ecclesial ministry, priest, collaborative ministry, or ordained/non-ordained.

> ... the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and ... your goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation) ... the goal is to do a generalising and not a particularising analysis (Yin 2003a, 10).[42]

Yin uses the example of a case study based on an author's own experiences in New York. Chapter topics do not reflect single-event experiences of New York (2003a, 37).[43] Each chapter raises theoretical issues of urban planning such as community parks, pavements, slum minimisation or transport. This method is consistent with the way Aspendale themes engaged the wider context. The notion of generalising to other case studies or contexts as a kind of crude comparison is unsatisfactory.

> Instead, an analyst should try to generalise findings to 'theory,' analogous to the way a scientist generalises from experimental results to theory ... In the aggregate, these issues in fact represent the building of a theory of urban planning ... Her [Jacob's] theory in essence became the vehicle for examining other cases (38).

Earlier discussion of fit noted Geertz's (1973) contribution as an anthropologist to the idea of thick description. Such description can reveal the riches and randomness of human behaviour but Geertz's main focus in the semiotics of culture is not found in articulating patterns of rules or codes.

> Man (sic) is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (1973, 5).

Clearly, the process of blending a grounded theory approach with theological reflection

> requires an extensive knowledge of relevant literature and a broad theoretical and conceptual knowledge. The emerging theory would tend to be rather thin without the constant comparative process ... This theoretical sensitivity should encourage the researcher to continually read in a range of fields to prevent being dominated mentally by one specialist discipline (Grbich 1999, 178).

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[42] Compare how theological reflection develops understanding or scenarios of potential meaning that accompany Kinast's "now I begin to see" phase. The literature review accompanies the data analysis and helps to expand and generalise theory thus becoming part of analytic generalisation.

[43] Jacobs, J. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.

The literature review thus became both an eclectic extension of the generalising phase of data analysis and also of the application phase of theological reflection.

2.3.5 *Participant-observer. A personal reflection*

> Theology may be defined as the study which, through *participation in* and *reflection upon* a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available (Macquarrie 1966, 1).

This is the first sentence I ever read for a theology class. It is relevant to the role of participant-observer. Participant observation is a technique of unobtrusive, shared or overtly subjective data collection that leads the researcher to spend time in an environment

> observing behaviour, action and interaction, so that he/she can understand the meanings constructed in that environment and can make sense of everyday life experiences. These understandings are used to generate conceptual/theoretical explanations of what is being observed (Grbich 1999, 123–124).

There are three roles in participant observation (Gans 1982; Whyte 1984; 1991; Robson 1993; Grbich 1999).

- Total Participant. The researcher becomes emotionally connected to the phenomenon and there is a fusion of identity until the research ceases (Ronai 1992). This was not the case at Aspendale.
- Total Researcher. This involves emotional and physical separation with occasional contact (Bogdan and Taylor 1975). The only purpose is observation. The researcher maintains "an emotional and physical distance between themselves and the observation setting" (Grbich 1999, 125). This was not the case at Aspendale.
- Participant-Researcher / Researcher-Participant. Awareness of the "dimension of human experience for both participants and researcher" is integral (Taylor 2003, 10).

The third approach values human experience and was used at Aspendale. For example, I noted and experienced:

- the complexity of feelings of all parties as the visiting priest briefly replaced the pastoral leader during the Mass for homily and Eucharist;

- the tension in the administration office when the new Archbishop terminated the model;
- the ambivalent feelings of the parish as this Archbishop opened the new buildings after significant growth and successful ministry.

This relationship requires discrimination because not all informants provide information and ideas of equal value.

> It is useful to the researcher and more enjoyable to the key informants if we expand the social process to discuss with these individuals what we are trying to find out and also consult them about how to interpret what we study. Key informants thus become active participants in the research (1990, 9).

The parish, and the parish leader helped to arrange meetings, implement surveys and organise feedback groups. The administration centre and the school arranged meetings with significant personnel. Contact was maintained with the community over a period of four years and observation accompanied other methods such as interviews, questionnaires and document study. This enabled me to be sufficiently familiar with the ethos, mores, structures, and cultural and theological presuppositions to check for possible distortions as the data was evaluated. I was perceived as a "participant" in the life of the parish both as a Christian person and as a minister from another tradition and invited to join various aspects of parish life. I experienced levels of connection due to my parish experience elsewhere. As a member of the ecumenical Christian community I was present in worship (Mass and Communion), prayer and reflection times, discussion groups on faith topics, classroom para-liturgies and business meetings. The parish was knowingly involved in research in which I was the main instrument. Some researchers have illustrated the possibility of this overt relationship distracting or disturbing those being studied (Whyte 1984). Other studies have indicated an opposite effect where

> members of the group, particularly key informants, are led to a more analytic reflection about processes and other aspects of the group's functioning. There are situations, for example in the evaluation of an innovatory program, where this can be of positive benefit (Robson 1993, 197).

While it cannot be established that participant-observers "generate deeper, more compassionate meanings than passive observers" it can be argued that "one role may work much better for certain people, certain situations" (Stake 1995, 104). As I became

immersed in a different culture I listened and reflected upon the data. I engaged in analysis, developed theory and moved from fit to understanding. I found this model worked.

Therefore, when the discipline of theological reflection combines with the rigour of grounded theory then research is enhanced. By paying attention "to reliability, validity and objectivity, then participant observation along with other essentially qualitative techniques can be 'good science'" (Robson 1993, 195). The observer actually becomes the research instrument and for this reason Lincoln and Guba advise that "one would not expect individuals to function adequately as human instruments without an extensive background of training and exposure" (1985, 195). Denzin and Lincoln raise the obvious issues of validity and reliability (dependability and trustworthiness) because of the subjective involvement (1994). Grbich notes, (my comments in brackets) that these factors are

> addressed by systematic *self–introspection* (the journaling of thoughts and feelings of the self) and *interactive introspection* (interaction with two supervisors), to produce an emergent layered account that reflects multiple images (1999, 130).

This description of the role of the participant-observer is therefore written as a personal reflection. The researcher used journaling as a pastoral resource, the discipline of theological reflection as an interpretive tool and over the course of the project had three Catholic supervisors: a psychologist with a strong lay involvement; a Catholic practical theologian; and an associate supervisor/biblical scholar with a specialist interest in ministry. Formation in theological reflection, pastoral counselling and cross-cultural mission was also important.[44] I became increasingly "familiar with the nuances of Christian life as expressed" at Aspendale and worked to have "a less disruptive research influence" (Taylor 2003, 10). However, the subjectivity of participant-observation leads Stake to comment candidly that

> we try to observe the case in its ordinary activities and places ... a case study is subjective, relying heavily on our previous experience and our sense of the worth

[44] Experience in counselling and family systems was transferable to data collection and analysis.

> of things[45] ... We try to let the reader know something of the personal experience of gathering the data[46] ... Our observations cannot help but be interpretive, and our descriptive report is laced with and followed by interpretation (1995, 134).

It was important to protect the parish from this subjectivity. Taylor's research on a New Zealand parish affirms the value of a wide-angled 'heads-up' approach. He became aware that each of his three emerging themes would, if pursued on their own, engulf the particularity of the parish and so he had to make an important decision. Taylor's answer, and my own, was to introduce a wider dialogue.

> ... such a narrowing of focus, while prudent in terms of the production of a thesis, would distort Cityside as a living community and push the focus toward the theologically abstract rather than the particular ... I decided to read widely and broadly, moving over a wide terrain of history, perspective and context. Rather than focus deeply, I would seek to introduce a wide variety of sources into the dialogue between Cityside and the gospel tradition ... (2003, 13).

Therefore as the focus shifted from the data to develop a more balanced perspective, the emerging themes led to the documents of the Vatican, various International Bishops' Conferences and wider Catholic literature. I also attended the annual conferences of Australia-wide pastoral planners to see the broader picture once the major themes had begun to emerge.

2.3.6 Aspendale, the Christian Story and Vision

After describing present praxis in sufficient detail and commencing critical reflection upon it, Groome indicates that dialogue leads the researcher to interact with the "Christian Story and the Vision that arises from the Story" (1980, 184–185; 1989, 89–90). A combination of Groome's reflective methodology and Taylor's practical insight enabled me to articulate the slippery connections between the focus of the case study, Aspendale, and the wider picture of the Catholic Church. Library research

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[45] My own faith tradition has embraced lay collaborative ministry from its beginnings in the eighteenth century. We have had ordained women ministers in Australia since the 1940's. Our smaller Churches can minister for years without clergy as lay presidency is normative. We appoint ordained clergy but in the local parish preaching is open to competent and gifted leaders. A commitment to ecumenism and egalitarian values drew me to Churches of Christ (Disciples). In the United Kingdom we are part of the United Reform Church. See Lyall Williams' outline of Churches of Christ traditions in Australia (1957).

[46] It is difficult listening to priests, parish associates, parishioners, parish planners and bishops as what they perceive as a hierarchical, non-consultative system seems to ignore their pleas for change.

focused on how the Catholic Church was experiencing the interwoven themes of lay ecclesial ministry and priest-shortage and whether theological reflection was used to engage these experiences.

John Fuellenbach offers a familiar and reliable template for theological reflection (2002),[47] that is doubly relevant because "questions regarding the mission of the Church should be of concern to the *whole* (my emphasis) Church and need to permeate the entire theological curriculum" (2002, xii). The positivist concept of generalisability has traditionally asserted that "all settings and participants, while unique, are representative of all others" but, for Grbich, a post-structuralist process favours "uniqueness and a multiplicity of perspectives, which may reflect and refract in many directions (1995, 130).[48] Therefore my interest in generalising from Aspendale to other contexts (pinpointing the reflections and refractions) was not a dominating factor, but I hoped that whatever emerged would not only add to knowledge of other cases, but also complement similar experiences or even challenge previous generalisations. This in turn contributed to the value and motivation of being involved in the "small and unique" especially when the apparently strategic and powerful influences belong to an entity as monolithic and potentially hierarchical as the Catholic Church. The local and global arenas of activity were important and both were listened to because they are indissolubly bound together.[49]

As the focus moved from Aspendale to a wider Catholic experience, the dialogue between the two domains was based on the flexible concept of "naturalistic generalisations" (Erlandson et al 1993, 12–13) as developed for use in case studies (Stake and Trumbull 1982). Stake argues that we learn by receiving generalisations from authority figures such as parents, teachers, priests, and writers. We add to this the

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[47] Fuellenbach, a theologian from the Gregorian in Rome, suggests four basic sources for theological reflection: (i) Bible, Tradition and the Magisterium; (ii) the on-going life of the worshiping community; (iii) the life situation of the committed community; (iv) and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

[48] Early researchers (Campbell and Stanley 1963) used the term *external validity* interchangeably with *generalisability*. Since research was not undertaken in the variable-controlled environment of the laboratory this emphasises that usefulness or transferability depends on rigorous attention to careful analysis.

[49] Discussion takes into account systems theory (von Bertalanffy 1968; Lewis 1996), the importance of dialogue for meaningful community and authority (Freire 1970; Habermas 1970; 1979; 1990; Tracy 1981; 1988) and the local/global debate (Schreiter 1985; 1997).

generalisations from our own experience (naturalistic). They are distinct from explicated or propositional generalisations received from others.

> Naturalistic generalisations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it had happened to themselves. It is not clear that generalisations are kept apart in any way in the mind. [It is a case of] one set of generalisations through two doors (1995, 85).

This distinction provided a more discriminating rationale for analysing data originating from the case study as it interacted with similar data or writings from other sources or as it echoed position-statements from the Archdiocese or the Vatican. There is a creative interplay between naturalistic and explicated generalisations that adds subtlety to analysis and interpretation. For Stake, "our primary task is to come to understand the case. It will help us to tease out relationships, to probe issues" (1995, 77). The case study must have priority but it remains part of the whole just as a single parish is part of the Catholic Church. Both parties speak to, and about, the other and therefore early data analysis provided emergent themes and an entire Church tradition to explore. Stake claims that the search for meaning is often

> a search for patterns, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call 'correspondence' ... We are trying to understand behaviour, issues, and contexts with regard to our particular case (78).

Significant understanding develops with time and familiarity, and this happened as coding and categorising progressed (Robson 1993, 206–226; Grbich 1999, 175–178) and emergent patterns provided "correspondence". The researcher considers the patterns "over and over again, reflecting, triangulating, being sceptical about first impressions and simple meanings" (Stake 1995, 78).[50] Rigour is achieved through "triangulation involving convergence (the location of the singular truth of a phenomenon) or completeness (the achievement of holistic information regarding a phenomenon) or simply cross checking the data" (Robson, 1993, 61).[51] Patterns within the case study led to external, wider checking for convergence and completeness in much more extensive research via a literature review that told me more about Aspendale, the Christian Story and the Vision of God's kingdom as expressed in the Catholic tradition.

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[50] See Appendix 4 for examples of coding and categorising.

[51] For extensive discussion of completeness and cross checking see Knafl and Breitmeyer (1991) and Lincoln and Guba (1989) respectively.

> Christian Story and its Vision find expression, though not perfectly, in a community of Christian faith. They can be encountered there in the reflectively lived faith and shared life of the whole community ... we must now go a step further if we are to avoid posing the version of the Story and Vision that we know as hardened ideology, as a final *theoria* imposed upon our praxis from outside of lived experience (Groome 1980, 193–194).

How does the researcher document the influence of "hardened ideology"? Browning's commentary on Groome affirms the strategy of moving over a wide terrain of history, perspective and contexts so local themes neither drown in the particular nor lose their ability to speak into a wider arena.

> Groome capitalises Story and Vision in relation to Christianity to emphasise their normative claims and to distinguish them from the stories and visions implicit in our various communal practices (1991, 219).

In conclusion, the normative claims (or explicated/propositional generalisations) of the Story and the Vision of the Catholic Church are woven throughout the story and vision of Aspendale with all its own naturalistic generalisations and those borrowed from Church teaching or other collaborative lay ministry experiences. Research on collaborative ministry moved constantly from the micro to the macro, from the particular to the general, and from the local parish to the worldwide Catholic Church. The move into the wider arena received greater impetus less than one year into the project when the change of Archbishop brought a change of strategic policy. However the methodology outlined above was flexible enough to deal with the significant change of direction.

Chapter 3

Aspendale: Findings and Results

3.1 The Parishioners' Story: "He Fits the Parish Like a Glove"

3.1.1 A comment on genre

Stake describes the style used in this report. This chapter uses a narrative form to tell the story of the parishioners and the pastoral leader (PL).

> Ultimately, the final writing, for me, is more than aggregation of sections but a shaping of them into a narrative that makes the case comprehensible. It sometimes takes on a story quality. And that is a story I come to understand as I am writing it, not really before (1995, 124).

Because case studies are progressively focused, the report includes reflections that emerged in the final stage of writing. This, in turn, prompted and extended the literature review and the document study in the search for challenging or corroborating stories. The parishioners' story is told first and each section concludes with a reflection. The PL's story is told with a reflection woven throughout.

3.1.2 ***Question 1*** *In the liturgy the Pastoral Leader ...*

> "The Pastoral Leader shows respect to our visiting priests while maintaining his own position. He has never set himself as the equivalent of a priest ... he always welcomes them as: The minister who will lead us in liturgy."

The data are overwhelmingly positive about the PL's preaching ability, pastoral sensitivity, practical administration skills, and sensitivity to visiting priests and pastoral presence. Following the change of Archbishop and the uncertain destination of the findings, the data were re-analysed around the emergent issues of the limited role of a lay pastoral leader in a Eucharistic context and the homily. Parishioners had a positive perception of how the PL dealt with the dilemma. Analysis identified performative themes, reflective comments on the PL's role and associated identity issues.

Two categories emerged:

1. Mutuality of ministry in partnership with priests.
2. Mutuality of ministry in partnership with the community.

Special note: Supplementary data from Question 6 (In his personal and professional life the Parish Leader ...), yielded a fruitful conversation between parishioners' opinion on *policy* and their *discernment* of the PL's distinctive contribution.

3.1.2.1 Mutuality of ministry in partnership with priests

Parishioners felt the PL was their "real leader." One commented, "we were all overjoyed to see him back with us and I felt quite headless without him." However the community was secure in the PL's relationship with visiting priests. He was "openly our parish spiritual leader" and not hesitant in "maintaining his own position." The relationship was one of "share[d] friendship and mutual respect" and "complementarity" as the PL helped the "priests do what they do best." This support extended to unofficial homilies at all three Masses that "take some pressure off the priests." This pastoral mutuality enabled the PL to "grow in confidence." Given that he "never set himself as the equivalent of a priest" he was able to welcome each priest as "The minister who will lead us in liturgy." Parishioners enjoyed an ambience of security based on a "day to day" relationship with the PL as a "constant focus." He became "a comforting presence who establishe[d] a spirit of belonging to our faith." The personality of the PL was "conducive" to effective liturgy and he "participated well with the many priests."

Reflection

The personality, confidence and maturity of the PL were essential to this mutuality. This generated a sense of security for parishioners. It is possible for a PL to have a strong pastoral presence without detracting from the role and identity of priests. Mutuality models a differentiation in roles, it need not create an identity crisis for priest or PL. Even the tension around the homily became an opportunity to reframe tasks in which the PL eased the burden of priests.

3.1.2.2 Mutuality of ministry in partnership with the community

The PL was a "constant" presence and the "leader who makes the liturgy happen no matter who the priest is." Mass had a "spiritual quality" as the PL engendered a "spirit of belonging to our faith."[1] The parish became "one body" and "while not intruding, he has cemented us together." The PL's homily included many relevant "experiences in and around the parish" and people observed him "grow in confidence." The PL's appointment was affirmed because it reduced the workload of neighbouring priests but some suggested "a priest from overseas be appointed to Aspendale," to solve the problems of "morning Mass not being available." There was sadness because children could not "develop a comfortable relationship with different priests that pop in and out and only on Sundays at that," and because no priest was available (as first choice) for pastoral concerns. The positive response to the PL's pastoral ability tempered grief over the loss of a resident priest however some could still not see beyond this. This sense of harmony exhibited a degree of tension yet still provided a safe place to declare the discomfort of ambiguity.

1. I feel the PL role should either be given the choice of being ordained and so choose this if he sees it as his or her calling and so takes on a full role as an assistant to the parish priest (or as a layperson paid accordingly).
2. I would prefer the priest and not the PL to give the preachings.
3. I would like to see ... more weekday Masses if possible.
4. This is the best that could be in the circumstances. I long for the day though when our PL will lead our Eucharist. I think our model doesn't make sense.

The final quotation picked up the pervasive sense of ambiguity that accompanies change and reform.

Reflection

Mutuality in ministry is based on our humanity and willingness to be appropriately vulnerable. In this environment parishioners can express losses in the midst of a paradigm shift as well as a pragmatism that accommodates change. Stage 3–4 transition requires room for expressions of loss and appropriate grieving.

[1] Data that demonstrated flexible "fit" was allocated to more than one category (Grbich 1999, 234–235).

A spirit of mutuality between the major identity figures is important. Tension can be normalised and difference celebrated if the ambience affirms the value of the PL expressing two-way (towards priest and community) mutuality. A PL's formation should include preparation to listen to those who feel unable to accept ministry from anyone other than a priest. The formational identity (security) of the PL will need to cope with this.

3.1.2.3 Supplementary data

Responses to the personal and professional life of the PL revealed an integration of *policy* opinion and *discernment* of the PL's specialist contribution. This reflective balance defined parishioners' shift from observation to reflection to practical suggestions. The following responses reveal parishioners' awareness of tension and commitment to praxis.

1. We fully approve of the PL. I think it shows that married men can be priests. How can the hierarchy ignore what is obviously God's will?
2. I feel the PL has been the best thing to happen to this parish. We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest ... we have been let down by the diocese in not having our own regular sacramental priests (as the model was meant to). We have had a wonderful and varied group of priests but I think it would be better to have 1-3 regulars who would get to know us as a parish.
3. He has done a superb job. Sadly he is not a priest, cannot celebrate Mass and, although I am sure he would hear the sins of many people, he cannot absolve sins. He is a good example of a layman who could be ordained - if he wanted it and the Church accepted him. But that's for the Church to decide.
4. The PL has recently been in hospital. However priests in other parishes have no doubt been ill also therefore this factor should not weigh in the balance against him. On the contrary, with a rapidly ageing clergy, it suggests that more pastoral leaders may be required to ease the burdens of those workers who are already bearing the brunt of the work.
5. The PL is always available and works extremely hard for this parish - if married priests were allowed he would be an ideal candidate.

Reflection

The PL's position became something of a role model but parishioners still embraced complexity in their reflection. The change of Archbishop meant there was no place for these intelligent and informed insights. The People of God are wrestling with

complex issues and dealing with the losses involved in transition. They are eager to engage in dialogue and corrective feedback. The glass ceiling of hierarchical decision-making can be depressing and disempowering when reflection is not encouraged. Stage 3–4 transition requires adequate dialogue. The People of God can see the tiredness and unrealistic demands and are compassionate towards lay leaders and priests and honest about their own confusion.

3.1.3 ***Question 2*** *In his pastoral ministry, the Pastoral Leader ...*
Question 4 *In his parish leadership, the Pastoral Leader ...*

"He fits the parish like a glove."

The two questions were fused when early analysis identified a significant degree of overlap. It was hypothesised that parishioners experienced pastoral ministry and parish leadership as a seamless whole. The following portrait of the PL seems idealised but it accurately reflects positive data from Likert scales that were consistent with observation and interview themes. A significant part of the data was collected after almost two years of ministry and the honeymoon time had passed. The human face of the PL emerged but was not allocated a separate category because it was a consistent theme throughout the data. Some felt "there was so much for [the PL] to learn" and the comment, "not having had an apprenticeship as a curate" acknowledged human and professional limitations. There was ambivalence at the opportunity to "connect with a family man, especially a humble one who has his own share of problems." However people noticed the PL's professional development and appreciated his willingness to be vulnerable and "show a human vision of the church." Two major categories and supporting properties emerged from this relational portrait.

1. A commitment to dialogue
    - that was reconciling and educative with mission as its goal,
    - and enabling of vocational awareness.
2. A facility with theological reflection.

Two overarching categories were also identified.

1. Pastoral individual.
2. Pastoral strategic.

These categories demonstrate the PL's balance of one-on-one skills and pastoral-strategic insight. They are not discussed separately but are used to support discussion of each major category.

3.1.3.1 A commitment to dialogue

There was a balanced focus on the PL's individual pastoral care and systemic pastoral care. His "commitment to our community" was seen in the "willingness to listen to others ... [and his] courage to arrange a forum where all parishioners can voice their opinion." Many went to the PL if "[they] needed someone to talk to or help in any way," and valued the discussion at the parish assembly where "future directions of the parish were sensitively planned by the PL." Individual and systemic dialogue became normative. "Creative discussion and direction ... enabled us to have a strong foundation of who we are" and communicated the "feeling that we, the people, own our parish." The "marked increase in co-operation between school and Church" and the regular references to "St Louis being a very tolerant parish" indicated the presence of a reconciling and educative dialogue.

1. He has achieved the impossible [task] of uniting all groups in the parish and presenting them a common goal - the spreading of the word of God.
2. St. Louis is a 'growing together' community and much healing has gone on since the PL came.
3. The PL ... has had the ability to bring the parish together - it is now a more united parish.
4. There was always a gap between school and parishioners before the PL came.
5. This has been his sole goal - to make the parish work as a whole.

Parish unity developed through the PL's "appreciation of the value of home groups" and his "encouragement to all who participate in the Mass." The enabling of vocational awareness in a context of collaborative ministry became a reality as the PL "encourag[ed] us to dream and to achieve ... this has been seen in the participation of many new people and families in areas from Church to social." The PL's "ability to get parishioners to volunteer and assist him" matched a talent for discerning "the people whose skills best meet the requirements." This "way of encouraging [parishioners] to dream and to achieve" in a context of "understanding and motivation" included a willingness to be transparent about "his own share of problems." The PL was "a good

motivator" who listened well and was available. The PL's humanity was a motivating factor.

3.1.3.2 A facility with theological reflection

> "The PL has always been very approachable and sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. During periods of personal crisis he has always made himself available and shown understanding and wisdom and placed the problems within terms of the Scriptures and Church teachings."

A pastoral one-on-one style that modelled theological reflection was accompanied by homilies where "a warm and loving" approach revealed "an excellent knowledge of Scripture." This became more than spiritual guidance or a ministry of presence because "as someone who really live[d] his faith" the PL "has brought and maintained peace, harmony and goodwill." This was illustrated when the PL "strengthened the bond between school and parish by bringing both together." Parishioners consistently noted the valuing of the community, both as a partner in theological reflection and as the outcome of theological reflection. "Creative discussion and direction" was encouraged by the PL in an atmosphere where Scripture and Church teachings "enabled us to have a strong foundation of who we are and where we would like to go."[2] As the link between parish and school was forged more strongly the PL "work[ed] in well with the schoolchildren - at their para-liturgies he talks and relates to them and they understand his messages". Parishioners respected "his scholarship in his knowledge of the Scriptures. Talks on St Mark's gospel were masterly and informative" and there was a similar level of theological awareness in home group leaders who were indirectly affirmed for knowing "Catholic doctrine well."

Reflection

Dialogue has to be authentically human or it is simply a strategic plan. A PL's commitment to a parish is expressed in a commitment to dialogue with parishioners. The goal of dialogue is educative and reconciling ministry focused on mission. Dialogue

[2] The Whiteheads (1995) strongly support the community element necessary for balanced reflection. Fuellenbach echoes the integrated use of Scripture and the Magisterium.

based on individual and systemic care engenders a sense of community and mission and when dialogue is both "prayerful as well as practical" the link between formation and theological reflection and good praxis is formed. When a community can discern "who we are" and "where we would like to go," then identity and call, ecclesiology and missiology come together. Individual and systemic dialogue thus become normative for a Church in mission.

This study indicates that the Pastoral Leader model, notwithstanding the theological tensions, can function effectively in an "already but not yet" mode. Over-control that is based on fear or unexpressed grief can be managed by appropriately formed and trained leaders. Pastoral strategies that allow for the pain of transition can promote a grounded faith and create formative feedback. A pastoral/individual ministry-style that blends with a pastoral/strategic style is an effective support for a reflective culture. Collaborative ministry begets collaborative ministry. The presence and collaborative skills of a PL promote vocational awareness.

3.1.4 Question 3 ***In his evangelising ministry the Pastoral Leader ...***

> "[ministry to] youth, ecumenism and work with the marginalised will be brought to fruition in time. The Pastoral Leader and the new model have only been operating for a relatively short time. Youth will be given a high priority according to the Assembly's goals, St Vincent de Paul's Society and other forms of social help to the needy are in operation already."

The evangelisation ministry of the parish was demanding but separate from the tension of liturgical leadership. Challenges and failures were evident but the PL accepted this and had an "active interest in all sections within our community." This ministry was marked by a sense of "team", a common goal and a balance between the two categories that emerged:

1. collaborative pastoral ministry (individual and group).
2. collaborative strategic ministry (ownership, planning and implementation).

3.1.4.1 Collaborative pastoral ministry

The PL was "actively involved with all our parish groups" and kept "lay ministers updated in their activities." Training and resourcing was a priority and the PL made "various workshops available ... and managed to incorporate (instigate) various groups for parish needs." Leadership had an individual and a corporate focus: "I am involved in evangelisation and the PL gives continued encouragement in all my ministry." The PL's ministry emphasised that "without on-going training and experience one cannot grow in the job." This ability to "build relationships with people and facilitate groups within the parish to work harmoniously together" was complemented with an "accessibility" that expressed a spiritual and priestly character.

> ... our pastoral leader has always been accessible to all parishioners and no doubt the spiritual and religious life of our people will continue to **grow with his presence** (my emphasis).

The majority of respondents owned difficulties, failures and setbacks (youth outreach and care for the poor) instead of blaming the leader. The highlighted phrases indicate this theme.

- Our youth activities have been discussed ... and many want them going again. However ... funding and **availability of organisers** (volunteers from the parish) are still lacking ...
- One weakness **we found** this year was reaching the marginalised and already steps have been taken to correct it.
- Youth is a problem area in this parish. The **PL and parishioners** are aware of this and **we are trying to form a strategy** to correct this. This aspect of failure is **not the PL's fault**.

A small minority of responses revealed, on follow-up, a "Father or Pastoral Leader is responsible" viewpoint.

1. The lack of a youth leader (meaning a paid role) is a void that needs filling. I believe a step must be made. ... evangelisation of parents is an obvious need, given the number of children at school Masses and their glaring absence at Sunday Mass.
2. The lack of a priest in the parish has left children as well as adults without someone to whom one could turn.
3. [The PL] could get to know the marginalised more. No home visits to them - perhaps not enough time. He is very committed to his work.

Reflection

The last respondent represents those who appreciated the work of the PL (and priests in the past) but did not grasp the traditional task of the lay faithful to evangelise "out there". The second respondent regretted having to pay priests to come to evangelise parents and children. Some did not know the PL often ministered to non-Catholics (individually and liturgically) through counselling and funerals that "took into account the views of others while maintaining a religious and spiritual base."

The political tension following the change of Archbishop was reflected in the representative comment that the PL's ministry to "this parish and its people [was] inspiring - particularly when we consider the adverse position of the Archbishop ... the PL has little opportunity to speak to vocations - the priests don't speak of it much either." Effective ministry in a stage 3–4 transition need not be inhibited by local or diocesan tension.

3.1.4.2 Collaborative strategic ministry.

This discussion shares data with the "collaborative pastoral" approach but highlights the empowerment of volunteers for ministry, as opposed to talking about it. Youth activities were being planned because "many want them going again" if there is the "availability of organisers." There was "an on-going effort to effectively reach the youth" and while this ministry "seems to flounder" the PL provides "various workshops" to enable these needs to be met. "Training and experience" complement a commitment where "youth will be given a high priority according to the Assembly's goals." Mission to those in the margins was "a weakness we found ... and already steps have been made to correct it."

Reflection

Collaborative ministry can flourish in spite of the predicted transitional tension at a parish level and systemic failure of will at an archdiocesan level. Transition assumes that there will be paradox and ambiguity, experiments and failure. Transitional leadership at a diocesan level did not match transitional leadership at a parish level. Mission, vocational development and a praxis approach continued in spite of the lack of

support. Tension is sustainable as long as there is dialogue instead of fear and isolation. The high level of mutuality between priests and PL provided an excellent base for calls to both vocations because the individual and corporate focus of evangelisation was balanced.

3.1.5 Question 5 ***In his administration, the Parish Leader*** ...

> "He notably highlighted it was NOT a one person show but a TEAM effort in which we all had a part to give in a greater or smaller way as we wished."

The Likert scale was extremely positive. Written and interview data served to nuance the assessment. Four categories emerged that served to highlight leadership skills.

1. Active presence
2. Communication skills
3. Creation of tangible projects
4. Formation of a vocational community

Discussion of data on the role of the PL's wife appears in the reflection.[3]

3.1.5.1 Active presence

The PL was "actively involved with many groups" and "regularly attend[ed] multiple meetings". He worked "with various support committees", a theme reflected in other questions. An active presence and familiarity with the daily patterns of parish life is in itself a form of communication and respondents felt that "in a quiet unobtrusive way" the PL "gets things done." He was a "constant presence," a resident PL who was "available".

[3] The focus of the research was the pastoral leader. It was inappropriate to include spousal comments directly in the data analysis.

3.1.5.2 Communication skills

"Details of all parish activities [were] regularly communicated" in multiple ways as the PL kept everyone "updated on what [was] happening." Ministry transition, new programs and an extensive rebuilding project required information that was delivered "both verbally and in written form." Parishioners regularly indicated that "newsletter and assembly reports were excellent examples of communication between the PL and parishioners." If there were any new directions then "change of ideas were brought to our attention" and sensitive financial issues were confronted because the PL "kept us open to all our financial problems."

3.1.5.3 Tangible projects

The building program was on target. "The renovation of the Church and the school recognis[ed] his ability as an administrator and a leader." It wasn't just about buildings it was about ownership and team building.

> ... many have risen to the challenge to make our parish our future. The new church building is a symbol of our hope for a great future ... with the understanding of the need for us to work together to make our future happen, in all ways, including financial.

Even the Church fete demonstrated "excellent participation" that exceeded previous years.

3.1.5.4 Formation of a vocational community

Consistent communication "help[ed] to maintain and build a sense of community that is vibrant and strong" and effective administration included the "ability to delegate jobs to volunteers." This was not perceived as "managing" but as "spiritual guidance that brought us together as one big congregation." The collaborative ethos implied that "we are very committed to assisting the PL in every way we possibly can." There was a positive shift in community perception because the "parish seems to be really going ahead and is working - it hasn't been like this for a long time."

Reflection

The PL's previous career and skills created administrative excellence but a sense of community building also permeates the data. Pastoral administration is a mode of spiritual care that develops community. Four factors determine credible authority:

- genuine listening;
- consonance of word and deed;
- contact with reality and relevant priorities;
- a focus on the centre of mission (Wilson 1991, 38–41).

The PL demonstrated the first two categories, his humanity and relevance to pastoral concerns impressed people, and he stayed on track with the practical and theological goals of mission. The PL and his wife certainly struggled but they were a team and, fortunately, the parish did not expect an unpaid minister. Preparation of a couple for this new form of ministry is essential. In other traditions the partner may be involved in study and formation so entry into local parish ministry is less of a shock. Pastoral support and internship experience for the couple should be a priority.

3.1.6 Question 6 ***In his personal and professional life the Parish Leader ...***

> "One of the first things the Pastoral Leader did after a time of looking, listening and seeing was to call together a leadership team ... to support him, bounce off ideas, be the eyes and ears of the parish. It is my privilege to have supported him on this, to learn much of his heart for our parish and to see many struggles on our behalf."
>
> "I believe he has the church 'at heart' and listens to people. He co-operates well with visiting priests. The parish is well served by visiting priests who all give a different aspect in their homilies."

One major category echoed the themes of Question 1. The PL's struggles became a medium of mutuality allowing parishioners' compassion and corrective feedback to honour his vulnerability. Two supporting properties were identified.

1. Leadership characteristics and mutual ministry.
2. - Local collaborative.
   - Political collaborative.

3.1.6.1 Leadership characteristics and mutual ministry

The PL was perceived as approachable, warm and friendly with a maturity and compassion that gave his professionalism a pastoral tone. His intellect, liturgical and homiletical preparation and theological expertise complemented his commitment and passion. However, some thought he was working too hard and that he was too available. The PL projected "a feeling of calm and spiritual serenity" and "managed his responsibilities without fuss" but many were aware of the pressure he experienced. The tension between competence and self-care was noted.

- Perhaps the PL works too hard both physically and mentally resulting in his 'heart condition.'
- … we occasionally worry about his health.
- Sometimes the PL spends himself in his service to others resulting in his recent illness. Since then he has curtailed some of his activities.
- The PL's health problems … caused some confusion …
- I've no idea if the PL maintains his physical fitness, he is so involved he must have little leisure time.

The human dimension and mutuality of the PL's ministry complemented his professional expertise. The opportunity to "learn much of his heart for our parish and see many struggles" was highly valued. The PL "and his wife are well liked," and the "person that makes the PL so approachable and aware of life is his wife". Some felt that "being a family man helped him in being accepted as our PL." The married team was noted in that the PL "frequently refer[red] to his wife's support." "The PL is our Church at the moment … he gives all the time. His commitment to family and parish seems a good balance." Much of this data indicated a time and boundary problem but following the "wake up" call of illness it was noted that, since then, "he has curtailed some of his activities."

3.1.6.2 Local collaborative

> "One of the first things the PL did after a time of looking, listening and seeing was to call together a leadership team. The purpose was to support him, to bounce off ideas, be the eyes and ears of the parish. It is my privilege to have supported PL on this, to learn much of his heart for our parish and to see many struggles on our behalf."

An ambiguous tone of possible hierarchical dependence ("on our behalf") also appeared after the PL's illness when "we were all overjoyed to see him back with us and I felt quite headless without him." The PL's pastoral and even priestly presence ("a holy exceptional man") contributed to this. However the "new Church extension is a testament to this leadership team" and balances this influence. Even though there was "some confusion" following the PL's illness, "things ran pretty well with the fine efforts of the parish secretary and parishioners." The parish was adjusting to these imbalances and tensions as the ministry developed. A team spirit embraced visiting priests.

> We've lived in the parish for over 25 years and feel at the moment, it's functioning better than ever with people returning to the 'fold' ... there's a good feeling around the parish - people talk openly how we have the best of both worlds. Priests with a wide range of abilities for the weekend Masses and a wonderful PL.

The mutuality between PL and priests is noted in Question 1 where "the respect of one to the other is quite evident." The PL delivered excellent 'homilies' and made sure that "Mass and Eucharist are central to our worship. The PL has helped make [them] all the more meaningful."

3.1.6.3 Political collaborative

The data featured political questions that accompanied the changes in policy and the following quotation illustrates three common themes in the thought processes of respondents.

> We fully approve of our PL. (*Affirmation*). It shows that married men can be priests. (*Hypothesis*). How can the hierarchy ignore what is obviously God's will?" (*Desire for dialogue*).

These themes were validated by additional data collection:

1. **Affirmation** was based on the PL's "deep commitment to Christ, the church and the parish [as] reflected in all facets of his life. An outstanding choice, and, hopefully, he'll be invited for a further few years further to the conclusion of his current contract."

2. **Hypothesis** based on the widespread belief that the project, exemplified in the PL, was the "best thing to happen to this parish. We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest." These sentiments were common but did not match the varying levels of grief in some parishioners. Parishioners enjoyed the partnership with visiting priests and thrived under the PL's ministry.
3. **A desire for dialogue.** "I feel very strongly that we have been let down by the diocese in not having our own regular sacramental priests (as the model was meant to). We've had a wonderful and varied group of priests. It would be better to have 1-3 regulars who'd get to know us." People were willing to be part of continuing debate because the PL was a good "example of a layman who could be ordained - if he wanted it and the Church accepted him." There is no parochial arrogance in this statement because it was "for the Church to decide." There was a strong belief that "if married priests were allowed, [the PL] would be an ideal candidate." People understood the pressure on the PL and suggested that "more PLs may be required to ease the burdens of those workers who are already bearing the brunt of the work." Notwithstanding the dilemma of eucharistic and pastoral leadership, they "had the benefit of so many wonderful and different priests for the sacraments. We are truly blessed."

Reflection

The failure of diocesan support threatened to undermine the role of priests who became a series of visitors with a liturgical function but no real pastoral connection. Even two or three regulars could have communicated this pastoral connection. The mutuality of the PL, the collaborative ethos of the parish, and the quality of visiting priests protected, delineated and enhanced the identity of lay and ordained leaders. A Catholic parish can have a competent, theologically-equipped PL working with visiting priests and neither is diminished in identity or role. There are ambiguities and political questions but, as a parish in transition, Aspendale challenges a powerful myth. Corrective feedback informed the PL that the parish refused to re-run the 'self-sacrificing expert' paradigm instead of a 'reflective-generative' one. A married team was received positively but illustrates the need for better self-care in the integration of the personal and professional tasks of collaborative ministry.

When competent people have so many skills and perhaps so much to prove, self-care and supervision is important. This should include intentional diocesan care for the family who may not have had appropriate formation. Ministry is not a normal job. For the PL and his wife (other PL's will have husbands), this was their first full time ministry. There had been no internship or specialist formation. His competence, commitment and energy had the potential to override family priorities, a common experience in early formation students (most have families) in theological college. Married couples have to allow, and prepare for, multiple models of ministry.

A key aspect of collaborative leadership is the ability to delegate. The early stages of the PL's ministry were collaboratively oriented but at a pace that became impossible to sustain. The ethos of the parish enabled this to become a shared problem rather than a scenario for burnout. The pace and style of collaborative leadership should model alternatives to older, unhealthy paradigms. If the PL appears calm and spiritually serene while parishioners are deeply concerned about overwork (culminating in illness) there is a dissonance that supervision can address. Awareness of the needs of a husband-wife partnership and family priorities can give parishioners a more sensitive expectation of ministry leadership. Following the PL's illness, parishioners began to adjust to a more balanced style. Professional competence and theological expertise combined with a secure personality and a secure community to enable respect for ordained and lay leaders to emerge. The tension of ministry paradox and ambiguity are predictable but this is the stuff of adult life as change happens.

3.2 The Pastoral Leader's Story: A "Crook Model" but an Effective Transitional Ministry

The PL described Aspendale as a "crook model" but the data reveals an effective transitional ministry.

3.2.1 *Category 1* *Loyalty and leadership that engages, challenges and supports the structures*

The PL's leadership was characterised by a loyalty that engaged, challenged, and supported Roman Catholic structures. This category involved two properties where the PL expressed his ministry through:

1. Relationship to structure as a committed Catholic.
2. Wrestling with identity through the experience of ministry tension.

The PL faced the complexities of a relationship with an apparently inflexible system that affected his call, identity and the experience of ministry itself. These properties belong to the liminal phase of stage 3-4 transition and tell the PL's story.

3.2.1.1 *Relationship to structure as a committed Catholic*

"I am an ecclesiastical officer."

The language of loyalty is the language of contract. The relationship was that of "an ecclesiastical officer" and this appointment was taken seriously.

> I am aware of my contract so I stick to my contract. My first obligation is to ensure that the principle and regime that the existing parish operates … is maintained. It's absolutely a Catholic parish and all the loyalties that a Catholic parish has to the Pope are absolutely … not questioned.

The contract clearly spelt out that the PL ministered "under canon law," and was responsible for maintaining the continuity of the parish with the faith tradition. Although the PL's spirit carried the burden of an unorthodox model, he knew where loyalty lay. The dilemma of obedience in the present when change beckoned was resolved by affirming that "loyalties … to the Pope … are not questioned." A duty of

obedience blended with a duty of care that remained "respondent to the Archbishop" and rejected a dichotomy of "congregationalism versus hierarchy." He was determined that nothing would happen to "undermine Catholicism". Despite the inevitable boundary-crossings that occurred in a liturgical context, the PL was still "strongly and contractually obliged to be Catholic." However there is a fine line between orthodoxy and pastoral practice.

> Only the priest may give the homily. In actual fact I'd preach often enough - maybe monthly at Sunday Mass ... the priest gives a 30 second homily and I give a reflection just for the sake of observing canon law in the area.

Following the corrective teaching of *On Certain Questions* and several letters from the Archdiocese, the PL was more careful. The internal struggle that followed these reminders of the PL's Catholic allegiance was bound up in his identity.

3.2.1.2 Wrestling with identity through ministry tension

> "I am looking down the future in a sort of way that is a luxury."

As the PL explored his hopes and dreams for lay collaborative ministry in a context of official doctrine and local and personal constraints an interview question emerged:

> The issues you spoke about in regard to the future of Catholicism seemed to be heartfelt and very personal. I got the sense that there was something happening *out there*, rather than something that you would be committed to actually bringing about, for example, the kind of change that might happen.

The PL articulated his inner tension: "I am looking down the future in a sort of way that is a luxury." The fusion of self and role as he explored the "luxury" of imagination and dissent was located in the tension between contractual obligation, the possibility of initiating change, and the fear of undermining the Church, global and local, he loved. All pastors, ordained or lay, face the exquisite tension of a Kegan-like arena (1982) where the possibility of personal growth may be limited by the inability to practice reflective skills. The PL's response balanced local and global priorities:

"For Aspendale right now ... // ... to be Catholic is very, very important."

A love that dares to question must also be a love that learns to pause. The PL reflected upon Scripture, the Magisterium, experience, and what was happening in the local community as he listened to his own dilemmas and those of parishioners. The conjunction of identity and conscience was expressed in the issue of the homily ("only the priest may give the homily"), and tempered by the call to pastoral leadership in a local church. In a hermetically sealed praxis, the PL asserted that neither his internal identity questions nor the broader political agendas had much "to do with what is happening at Aspendale." There was "something happening out there" in the wider scheme of change and Spirit, and he had to trust that his faithful service would contribute. One pastoral task was clear. "My first obligation is to ensure that the principle and regime ... is maintained ... it's absolutely a Catholic parish." The data presented a picture of an obedient and loyal servant of the Church. He was also a responsible resident pastor, pragmatic visionary leader and innovative teacher whose role almost conformed to that of a priest. A key to his balanced identity was the rejection of "congregationalism versus hierarchy" as he affirmed the identity of the local AND the global and expressed these values in his leadership.

This is an important aspect of the story of stage 3–4 transition. The PL demonstrated that those in power have little to fear if pioneering ministers are chosen for their demonstrated reflective capacity, visionary thinking, and respect for tradition. The pastoral leader was not the liturgical leader but ambiguity and paradox were held in tension by the PL's responsible orthodoxy and the parish's response to an unorthodox model. All parties were 'held' by the structure of wider Catholic tradition but, at that time, the official Melbourne part of this tradition had no place for this story. Integrity is not always revealed in the avoidance of error (impossible) or in ministry practice that does not sometimes push the boundaries, but in the way we reflect upon tough moments of potential growth and develop our own praxis. The PL did not say that the future, or that which builds into the future has little to do with the present. He was engaging the future all the time as he lived through change and transition. Look and see, test and reflect, is a process that leads to the point where the tension is not resolved by a pragmatism that avoids the issues but a pragmatism that embodies a faith and hope.

3.2.2 ***Category 2*** *The ability to analyse and critique*

> "I remember saying to the selection people: "This is a crook model of Church you are messing around with here." I know enough about the theology of ministry to know it stinks to separate community leader from liturgical leader."

Kinast suggests that the question "How did I get here?" is a key to entering an experience, and theological reflection identifies the dynamics of the context by identifying the *players*, *place* and *plot* (1996, 45–49). Properties were developed to support these "constructed" categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1998).

The Players. Who is directly involved? The researcher looks for dominant roles. Relationships are examined and theological implications are considered.

The Place. What is the setting for the events? Place is identified by the factors that interact to create the experience and the researcher identifies this dynamic network of forces. Social analysis uncovers structural elements which may be economic, political, cultural, social, gender or generational.

The Plot. What are the issues or values at stake? Identify the issues people face through analysis of images or symbolic language. Look for dominant topics and link them to theological concepts and the Christian story.

These categories inevitably overlap and share thematic similarities but the following discussion interprets this as an aspect of the integrated, reflective journey of the PL. At times polyvalent data were borrowed from other categories to highlight meaning.

3.2.2.1 The Players

There were three sets of properties that were not binary opposites but descriptions of dynamic relationships observed and experienced by the PL.

(a) Present Church	<>	Future Church
(b) Catholicism	<>	Disciple
(c) Catholicism	<>	Priest/Lay leader

This relationship represented for the PL the questioning, exploring players. The narrative sometimes uses the present tense to create a sense of immediacy. Those "questioning the role of Catholicism in the future" are aware of the "undercurrent of different trends" and many have "theology or ministry degrees." They are seeking a "new form of Church" that will "move away from the monolithic structure" because they know this will not be the "be all and end all" for ever. The "Church at the local level is getting stronger" and these players "fall back on their own community" and a "personal relationship with Jesus." Although the move is "in a congregational direction" "the value of a central tradition" is maintained. The bishop is still important because of the "danger in congregationalism of moving away from those who maintain the strand or the tradition." A sense of hope and change is tempered by the reality of the shortage of priests and the Present Church is concerned about tomorrow. Aspendale parishioners are anxious about whether "priests will still come to say Mass" or whether their church will "become part of another parish." These immediate and local issues mean that at times, "looking down the future is a luxury." There is a pragmatism where "most people would say it's terrific getting different priests and a different approach" but the tension of "not being the liturgical leader but being pastoral leader" is a weekly reality. The PL stated the problem.

> I remember saying to the selection people: "This is a crook model of Church you are messing around with here." I know enough about the theology of ministry to know it stinks to separate community leader from liturgical leader.

However the tension of the Present Church also affirms for the PL that "there's another view of priesthood where there is only one priesthood, the priesthood of the people of God … you are owned by the whole people." Present and future come together in:

1. the common fear of anticipated loss of the right to the Eucharist;
2. the blessing of a temporary solution;
3. and the dilemma of a compromised pastoral leader.

(b) Catholicism < > Disciple

A disciple lives and grows in the embrace of the Catholic Church and also understands the tension between the tenets, doctrine and culture of Catholicism and the

lived experience of the Catholic Disciple. "Catholicism" fitted the images of a constructed reality that disciples engage in a structural rather than a relational way. The PL identified a "monolithic hierarchical structure" where the following of Jesus Christ is "not necessarily linked to Catholicism." The "ordained celibate male ministry" is part of this structure and when Rome claimed its "revealed doctrine of infallibility [meant] that women may not be ordained they did themselves incredible harm." He felt that when Catholics "look at Scripture they find no evidence" for this position. This alienates many in the Australian Church and although bishops still interpret the issues the "central authority begins to be undermined." In saying "that's nonsense" to the official doctrine, the Disciple is thrown back upon his or her "personal relationship with Jesus" and a formational journey symbolised by "Fowler's stages of faith, level three or ... four." Disciples reflect theologically from where "they are in their life situation," As they ask the question "[w]hat does revelation of Scripture and tradition say," their "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" is explored in the context of "what does this mean for community?" Even though "to be Catholic is very important" and the PL would "hate to do anything to undermine Catholicism" the fact that he is "strongly contractually obliged" leads to a commitment to "the Catholic regime." Two quotations highlight the paradox and tension.

> Under our particular purpose the person who presides, the Catholic regime if you like, the relationship between the presider of the Eucharist and the person who homilises or preaches the word is a very strong connection ... this is an important connection.

> People respond to pastoral presence more than grand ideas ... the pastor is there for leadership in liturgy and for ideals but unless the pastoral presence is there the response doesn't follow. The situation of course is that I don't lead in the major liturgies.

It is complex and confusing for all parties because an outsider who preaches "is immediately handicapped" due to the "difficulty of applying the word to the living situation." There is no solution because "as far as Eucharist is concerned there is a substantial impediment" and "only the priest may give the homily." To be a Disciple within the Catholic Church is one thing but to be a Disciple within Catholicism is another.

(c) Catholicism < > Priest / Lay Leader

Emerging models of leadership challenge the "ordained celibate male ministry of priesthood." The fear of not having a priest for Sunday Mass accompanies the daily reality of the PL's "pastoral presence." When the visiting priest "gives a 30 second homily and [the PL] gives a reflection" the paradox of lived experience and the demands of Catholicism impacts the priest, the PL and the community. It is a "very difficult thing to be the PL if you aren't also the Eucharistic leader" and this anxiety leads to the cry to the hierarchy to "ordain more people and not restrict it to the celibate male." Church history indicates that "leadership has come out of community" and in the early Church the "community put the leader forward and said "Look! Ordain him." The tradition that "reversed the sociology" of the early Church is now questioned and the PL is caught in the dilemma.

> My experience has reinforced my conviction and made it stronger and personal ... there's a feeling you're not really wanted ... you are a bit of an embarrassment. I have the feeling the Archbishop would be happy if it fell over, if the experiment didn't work. His priority is to boost priesthood and the image is lifted morale ... a high theology of priesthood. The focus is on the *alter christus*.

The challenge of large numbers of PLs might render the "status of priest not quite as high" and "might explain the lack of vocations [and] disaffection about celibacy." As with any experiment there are various lobby groups and the political tension is real for the PL. He notes that "if this model succeeds it won't help the attitude that the priest is needed to run a successful parish," and some priests even say that "we all expect the Aspendale experiment to fall over." There was no official encouragement of the model and even though the PL found that priests were "very welcoming" he was prevented from attending meetings of priests even though he was leading a parish. The response from the hierarchy, "No, you're not a priest" foreshadows the theme of alienation.

3.2.2.2 The Place

Three sets of properties developed. They took the form of binary opposites along with a "floating" property (transition) that indicated the reality of liminal space (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969; Driver 1991). Stage 3–4 transition took on the

characteristics of liminal theory. The following properties were selected from those developed by Turner (92–93) and adapted by Driver to describe the de-structuring or transition of community/communitas (1991, 152–165). The 'de-status < > status' property was by far the most influential and is listed first.

(a) De-Status	<>	State
(Freedom from fixed positions)		(Accepted status quo)
(b) Communitas	<>	Alienation
(Growing connectedness)		(Disconnectedness)
(c) Equality	<>	Inequality
(Equalisation of power)		(Imbalance of power)

Note: 'Transition' was interpreted as the simultaneous experience of binary opposites.

The equality < > inequality property was small in data allocation. However, it is critical for understanding the tension of power exchanges in community so it is discussed along with the communitas < > alienation property. The transition property was an influence throughout and described the local (Aspendale) and global (Roman Catholic Church) experience.

(a) De-status < > State

The questioning of "ordained celibate male ministry," deconstructing "monolithic hierarchical structures" and observing as "new patterns emerge" inevitably challenges the status quo. Bishops can "maintain the tradition in balance" but "unless tradition is held in place" the balanced tension of liminal space can dissolve and expose the Church to "danger in congregationalism." "I don't lead major liturgies" states the PL. Catholicism as it exists means that the PL, essentially the leader of the community, observes canon law by giving a reflection after a 30 second homily by the priest. This is more than playing with the rules, it is a liminal action responding to experience. Transitional reality elicits the claim that "they should ordain more people and not ... restrict it to a celibate male." It is difficult for the PL and the parish to wrestle with "a high theology of priesthood" when "there's another view of priesthood where there is only one priesthood, the priesthood of the people of God." The PL and some parishioners know that there will be "disappointment if it works too well." The

Archbishop is clear that the model "won't be extended" and given the growing shortage of priests, the "difficulty of not being liturgical leader but being the pastoral leader" highlights the tension of communitas < > alienation.

(b) Communitas < > Alienation. Equality < > Inequality

Within this liminal phase, freedom from fixed positions challenges the status quo. The experience of communitas (Church "at a local level is getting stronger") and inequality leading to alienation ("Rome vetoed what was accepted by most") creates deep frustration. "Undercurrents of different trends" led people back in a congregational direction to discover "the presence of Christ in community." The PL and parishioners feel that "people respond to pastoral presence more than grand ideas" and believe that the "notion of Eucharist is that the community gathers." The PL's communitas experience of leadership clashes (alienation) with the experience of having "somebody from outside who is not the leader ... applying the word to the living situation." All parties are described as "handicapped" but the PL, priests and parishioners' embrace of collaborative ministry enables this to be held in tension. The PL carries the major burden of the ambiguity of transition and liminality:

> [What happens when] a priest comes in to say Mass who is not the lay leader?" Most people would say it's terrific ... getting different priests ... a different approach, they're all good and give a good sermon. This is the difficulty of not being liturgical leader but being the pastoral leader ... that probably comes from me more than anywhere else.

Although the PL insists this is "a crook model of Church" his sense of institutional alienation becomes a "personal cross." His "bitching needs to be in private," and collaborative ministry enables the parish to endorse the PL's ministry and role even though it is a "crook model." Communitas develops in the midst of alienation. The movement "back in a congregational direction" is not a rejection of a centralised tradition, it is a celebration of this communitas, later expressed in the decision to politely boycott the new Archbishop's survey that had eliminated their model. The PL identifies communitas in the early Church as the source of vocational ministry but now that "selected priests are put in charge," alienation sits alongside communitas. The PL returns to a theme that appeared many times over the years:

> I know enough about the theology of ministry ... it stinks to separate community leader from liturgical leader. (Alienation). In the history of the Catholic Church ... leadership has come out of community. (Communitas). Even [in] the early church, the community put the leader forward and said, "Look! Ordain him!"

At the diocesan level, communitas is discovered with many priests who are "very welcoming." However, alienation accompanies his role that is "not in the culture" so when the Archbishop convenes his priests, the PL comments: "I think I should come because I'm running a parish. He says: No, you're not a priest, you don't come." The final straw seems to be the mail that goes to a local priest and never to the PL whose heart, life and soul are invested in Aspendale. The PL summarises the communitas < > alienation experience.

> I said to [the priest]. "This is a bit crook". He says. "It's probably canonical you know!" So all of these little things ... pretend I'm not there, or we sort of hope it'll fall over."

Each of these liminal polarities describes the experience of ministry during transition. All are predictable, all are challenging but all were manageable because at the local level people were exploring the boundaries of collaborative ministry, taking reasonable risks and experiencing community. Until the change of Archbishop the same was true at a diocesan level. As *On Certain Questions* revealed, it was also true at a Vatican level. The plot became more complex.

3.2.2.3 The Plot

Given that most of the discussion focused on the role and purpose of leadership, dialogue and vocation formed a natural partnership.

(a) Ecclesia semper reformanda[4]

(b) Dialogue < > Vocation

[4] Hans Kung summarises *ecclesia semper reformanda*: "There has been a process of deformation, but there has also been a process of reformation ... negatively through the discarding of deformations, mistaken attitudes and developments, and positively through beneficial developments" (1967, 337).

(a) Ecclesia semper reformanda

Discussion of other categories has already recognised the PL's awareness of, and engagement with:

1. a constant undercurrent of transitional trends;
2. new patterns of Church, ministry and leadership;
3. movement away from monolithic hierarchical structures;
4. the desire for change;
5. the danger of congregationalism;
6. a commitment to support core tradition.

Boundaries were stretched when the priest gave a "thirty second homily" before a reflection from the PL. He felt that,

> if this model succeeds it won't help the attitude [that] the priest is needed to run a successful parish ... it undermines the view that the ordained celibate male is essential for the functioning of the church.

Visiting priests described the model as "edgy" (synonym for *semper reformanda)* but unthreatening. The PL enjoys the support of "the commitments of the previous Archbishop." He knows the new Archbishop is never "unfair or misleading," but it is a model he does not "favour" that will simply be allowed to run its course. This local, relational and political tension creates the dynamics of *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The stark promise that the experiment "won't be extended anywhere else" and the diocesan plans to "welcome priests from overseas" pressure the PL. The feeling that he was a "bit of an inconvenience" grew. As a researcher I had a similar experience. He is still strong in his belief that the Church has to change and he doesn't know "whether it would be recognisable as the Catholic Church in 100 years." Alongside these eschatological moments the PL believes that the Church at "the local level is getting stronger" as a prompt to reformation.

(b) Dialogue <> Vocation

The plot of *ecclesia semper reformanda* shared data with the place of *alienation* and *state*. Similarly, Mountain's study (2005) shows how shared data contribute to two different categories: "The meaning of prayer" and " The function of prayer." These partner-properties describe the experience of those involved in challenging the boundaries. The property of dialogue can be present or absent. Its presence brings encouragement that sustains a sense of hope, its absence brings discouragement and disillusionment. When "Rome vetoed what was accepted by most" this "did a lot of harm to its authority." The PL felt that when "people look at Scripture they find no evidence" for the official position on women in ministry. Many now have theology or ministry degrees and question the future role of Catholicism. There is regret over the lack of dialogue, and grief because leaders lost credibility. Because of this inability to dialogue, "Rome was not helping itself". The PL and parishioners believe that their experience, both positive and negative, is worth validating through dialogue.

> My experience has reinforced my conviction and made it stronger and personal ... there's a feeling you're not really wanted ... that you are a bit of an embarrassment. I have the feeling Archbishop would be happy if it fell over.

A sense of alienation and a lack of dialogue emphasise that there was nowhere to go with the insights gained from the experience. The contentious topics that accompany collaborative leadership and the shortage of priests are doubly frustrating for the PL. Because the parish was basically happy with progress he admits that the tension came "from me more than anywhere else." This is the tension of vocation and expression of gift. The PL summarises critical dialogical issues:

- ... unless the tradition is held in place by certain authorities there is chance of dissipation ... communities will go off in their own directions.
- To be Catholic is very, very important.
- Somebody from outside who is not the leader is not able to articulate the concerns of the community.
- ... it is difficult to be the PL if not the Eucharistic leader ... I know about the theology of ministry, it stinks to separate the community leader from the liturgical leader.
- ... the ridiculous requirement for celibacy to be compulsory ... they should ordain more people not restrict it to a celibate male.
- if this model succeeds it won't help the attitude the priest is needed to run a successful parish ... [it] undermines the view that the ordained celibate male is essential for the functioning of the Church.

The elimination of the model prevents dialogue and this has the result that the PL feels he does not exist, even the mail goes to someone else. Difference meant exclusion and the absence of dialogue reinforced exclusion.

3.2.3 ***Category 3.*** *The Pastoral Leader's own story and vocation as a part of the drama*

This category gives a voice to the life and call of the PL. Data from personally focused conversations and observation were blended in an "iterative mode" with data used for other themes (Grbich 1999, 223). Four properties described the experience of the PL. Brackets indicate who identified the essence of the property.

1. Ideological spectator. (PL).
2. "Ninety percent priest". (Parishioner).
3. Vocationally questioning. (Researcher).
4. "A bit of an inconvenience". (PL).

The properties are woven together to form a single narrative discussion where overlapping data indicates the PL's total involvement with the project.

3.2.3.1 A role in the play

How does one remain passionate but disinterested? To be fully committed to the project and yet be "indifferent" as to the outcome is a spiritual and pastoral discipline.[5] "All this seems to be happening as if I am just a spectator." The PL feels that the "main game" is somewhere other than Aspendale and he has faith in the "outcome of the process." In spite of the model's problems and the change of direction the last five years of his life mean something is happening that will be "alright in the end." He understands the model's limitations but for pastoral reasons, his complaints must be "private." He

[5] Ignatian spirituality uses this term as a positive indicator of trust in God

feels deeply the negative aspects of the "divorce" of pastoral spiritual leadership from liturgical leadership and his personal frustration surfaces. His "experience of it reinforced [his] conviction and made it stronger and personal." He identifies "some personal baggage ... I wanted to be a priest a long time ago" so he has to be careful not to push "something that is personal and not the Lord's agenda." He tests the issue, tests his humanity and decides to "live with the paradox" to ensure his own agenda "is set aside." He stands apart from the issue of the ordination of married people because "Catholic culture has no idea at all of what it might mean for a married couple to be involved in ministry." He advocates careful thought on such ministry even though he is fully involved in it. Experience and spiritual discipline have made him an ideological spectator, an excellent reflective resource. The PL's personal history underlies the property of the "ninety percent priest," a term used by a parishioner who feels the PL is a hundred percent priest only allowed to do a ninety percent job.

> You see I wanted to be a priest a long time ago and ... I left before I got ordained, but I've felt a sense of failure about that and I've carried that a long way, most of my life, maybe only 5 years ago I started to ... come on.

The tension of the ninety percent priest is predictable given the constraints upon liturgical leadership and the constant search for priests for the Mass roster. Parishioners wrote to the new Archbishop to encourage a fresh approach to ordination but the PL does not imagine a vocational change for himself. "Although I've thought of going to him I probably never will" because the "regime of celibacy will continue in the Western Church." This integrated "balancing act" has a difficult edge to it. While priests welcome him individually he is an unwelcome outsider to the system. He performs most of the same tasks but the official response is "No, you're not a priest." The PL is a ninety percent priest according to canon law but many in the parish experience him as a hundred percent priest.

The practical dilemmas of paradox become the existential questions of ministry. The PL vocationally questions his role and identity when he realises that almost twenty priests are on the Mass roster. He has "no legitimate complaint" but his vocational task is compromised. "My job is to be both pastoral and spiritual leader ... and to divorce that from liturgical leadership [is a] crook idea." His discontinued call as a priest is "re-

awakened" and now he is "involved in doing all the things that perhaps I would have envisaged I would have done as a priest except I'm not involved in liturgical aspects." He therefore "pray[s] to distinguish the Lord's agenda" in the midst of this subjective ambiguity. The PL manages these challenges theologically and reflectively but the issues of couple and family ministry lead to deeper questions. Given that Catholic culture struggles with the idea of married couples in ministry, the PL notes that in other traditions vocation is often a long, shared history. The dynamics and boundaries of ministry complicate the depth of change and loss.

> They are very aware that my wife is hurting badly and they have been very solicitous and caring and doing all they can but she is still the vicar's wife. You don't talk to the policeman's wife. There's a limit to the relationships - as much as people say, "Come out", there's a barrier there for friendships on an equal basis.

There had been no lead-time or formation for this and it is a tough journey. After a long time of isolation for the wife, the couple resource themselves with "a network of friendship at a level of peers and equality." The PL raises some important questions.

> ... if the Catholic Church went that way we'd spend lot of time learning what others have already coped with for 400 years. [It] raises the question of how the call would be responded to if married people were called to ministry.
> How they would prepare for it? What the criteria would be? All my wife had to do was answer a question, a disclaimer for the Archbishop: Do you support your husband in this? ... but if it was now she wouldn't sign. All that's got to be thought through.

This is a partnership ministry, one that survived, but the level of preparation was inadequate. The PL states that it was "something I've wanted to do" but his wife "didn't have this call." The discernment of a mutual call had not been thought through and the impact could have been disastrous.

The sense of "I'm a bit of an inconvenience" attaches to many facets of the project. Patterns of parish life have been broken liturgically, culturally and relationally. The change in policy compounds the feeling for the PL and the sense that the Archbishop was "putting up with it" created a sense of alienation. This factor is underestimated but fortunately the spirituality and experience of the PL hold firm. This may not happen in all cases. If the PL does not belong to the same category as priests or

pastoral associates, where will he find a home without meeting direct rebuffs when prevented from attending official meetings of priests or when parish mail is sent to a neighbouring priest? It became an accumulation of "all of these little things, as if, pretend I'm not there, or we sort of hope it'll fall over." The PL was resilient but nobody wants this to happen again.

3.2.4 ***Category 4*** *Servant leadership and pastoral insights*

Dokecki et al describe collaborative leaders as "reflective-generative" (1996). Sofield and Kuhn identify four traits within this concept (1995, 153–212), and this final category uses these four labels to describe the character of the PL's ministry. They formed two pairs of dialogical properties.

1. Integrity < > Generativity
2. Compassion < > Joy and Hope

This is the story of the PL's philosophy of ministry. There is a strong positive correlation between this category and the assessment by parishioners.

3.2.4.1 Integrity < > Generativity

> "The pastor is there for leadership in the area of liturgy and for ideals but unless the pastoral presence is there the response doesn't follow."

"Except for the few who are thinking already" the PL keeps his questions to himself. For some groups the emerging challenges "might be devastating" so he "starts where people are at." He stays faithful "to the process of consultation through the parish assembly" in the hope that his ideas are,

> coming out of the community, or community is identifying with them. My tendency is to float with maybe one or two individuals lots of issues ... [and] a small team of four or five people with whom I consult regularly about what is happening in the parish ... I would first float with them and ... if it is ... a broad policy issue for a whole year, present it to the whole assembly.

This enables the parish to develop "vision and strategies for the future" but the PL has a "peculiar" sense of distance from events. Generativity defines the move from self-centred to other-centred and enables a balanced sense of detachment. "All this seems to be happening as if I'm just a spectator." For Erikson, the culmination of developmental stages through life is the ability to trust, function independently, risk and initiate new behaviour (1963). This reflects the PL's ministry style. "I've had something to do with it. In another way I've had nothing to do with it." Congruence between professed values and lived reality is expressed in ministry where "the business of forming community is a witnessing event" in itself. It is "impossible for a community to be bonding in the way that I am talking about and for that not to be noticed in the community." The PL believes that the "notion of ministry is the notion of service, but it's service for mission." A generative leader attains a sense of personal identity, works effectively with others, and is animated with life in serving others. The PL imparts his passion for a "community that is coherent and organic ... when it bonds together and the Spirit is active." This "community needs to find its mission" and, given that people "respond to pastoral presence," his task is to treat with dignity and respect those parishioners who are "committed, hard working and good thinking but quite contrary to" some of the new directions. This ability to listen to others in order to value their perspective is pastorally focused on what is just and fair and gives time for development. The PL is sensitive to those who "struggle at this stage to develop a sense and reality of belonging" and he "hates to inject" his ideas inappropriately. "I may be the only one thinking that way," so, without avoiding issues, it is important to be cautious.

3.2.4.2 Compassion < > Joy and Hope

Compassion is the point of contact for a generative person, not at selective times but in a persistent way. It is an attitude that is combined with competence. This was the parishioners' experience of the PL. The PL considers the parish as a whole as it "looked first at its own understanding of itself - internal unity, healing of some past hurts, hospitality, mutual care - all things that found, and reform, and recreate parish family." This spirit of generative compassion celebrates the comments of people that the "most noticeable thing in the parish ... is that healing is occurring and there is a sense of community growing." Ministry is not an abstract experience because "the care and

commitment that come with healing" invite parishioners into a journey of "seeing what discipleship means to us." Joy that captures and internalises Christ's abundant life seeps into "the broad area of ministry and mission," and hope develops healing support systems to sustain and refresh for the journey. The PL has "faith in the outcome of the process." The healing of relationships

> is evidence that there is another plan there and we are just here going along for the ride a lot of the time ... here is a real process of healing coming through a group that in the past was seen as divisive. As a Christian family we also have to ask: What is our mission?

The PL uses the support systems of the parish by "consulting regularly" and his gut level understanding of the problems of the people ("start where people are at") creates "coherent and organic" community. Hope is about everyday life and a dialogue between heart and head and "unless that happens things begin to decay." The final words belong to the PL as he describes the goal of collaborative ministry.

> Christ's church is essentially a church of mission, spreading good news, the gospel. Gospel values do make life workable and ... unless a church is in mission it is not fulfilling the role of church. Unless there is a gathering, a church or a community of some sort that is recognisable as a unit it's not ready for mission.

3.3 Summary and conclusions

Sofield and Juliano's theory of stage 3–4 transition provided the theoretical focus for theological reflection and qualitative data analysis throughout this chapter. The role of Lay Pastoral Leader was evaluated and response to his ministry indicated that effective stage 3–4 transition requires the following four major theoretical bases:

1. A facility with flexible models of theological reflection and a commitment to complementarity and mutuality in the early formation and ministry practice of priests and lay leaders.
2. Strategic and intentional internships for lay pastoral leaders and specific support systems for those who are married are essential.
3. A commitment to training and education in the pastoral application of principles of grief and loss as the Church experiences significant changes in ministry paradigms.
4. A culture of effective, sustained dialogue.

The following summary of the categories and themes that emerged from the Aspendale project interprets the four points noted above and provides pastoral guidelines that serve to inform practice and also develop hypotheses. This summary also seeks to bring together the *Reflections* that concluded each of the sections of analysis.[6]

A. An observed mutuality between priest and lay leader provides:

1. Safety and holding for those struggling with ambiguity;
2. A place to express a sense of loss or grief in not having a resident priest;
3. A place to normalise the tension and anxiety of liminal experiences during a paradigm shift;
4. A pastoral presence that witnesses to reconciliation in the midst of alienating change;
5. A sense of security and strength for mission when there may be no corresponding diocesan collegiality.

B. The three-way partnership between priests, lay leader and parish provides a level of mutuality based on a parish-wide collaborative ethos that:

1. Protects, delineates and enhances the identity of lay and ordained leaders;
2. Preserves the identity of priests from a functional status when a lack of diocesan support may reduce the profile of priests to a series of visitors with no pastoral identity;
3. Offers corrective feedback to pastoral leaders whose enthusiasm and skills tend towards a 'self-sacrificing paradigm' that erodes healthy boundaries, safe practice and self-care;
4. Models a level of humanity and transparency that is healthy and balanced;
5. Complements the priest/lay leader mutuality with an ability to accept the paradox and ambiguity of parish community transition.

[6] See Chapter 6 (*Key Findings and Their Implications for Practice*) for a more detailed outline of the hypotheses developed from these categories and themes.

C. For this model to be effective,[7] the pastoral leader[8] must demonstrate:

1. Credible authority based on listening skills, consonance of word and deed, a genuine mission focus and practical vision;
2. A capacity for theological reflection that appreciates in advance the paradox of being a pastoral leader who cannot be the liturgical leader, and that takes into account his or her experience of frustration;
3. The maturity to manage the political and theological tension in order to empathise with those who are grieving the loss of a resident priest.

D. Supervision topics will include the following themes:[9]

1. Loyalty to the Church's teaching through Canon Law and the Magisterium is constantly in tension with one's identity as a 'ninety percent'[10] priest.
2. Self-care should focus on time management, marriage responsibilities and the need to find appropriate support networks due to the pioneering nature of this ministry.
3. Pastoral support for a married couple is critical as there is no easy entry into ministry without an internship of some kind. Single leaders also need appropriate support.
4. Theological reflection on vocation and identity is critical because his or her service is a service of the Church and no longer that of an individual Christian.
5. Explore what aspects of pastoral care are appropriate to the sense of alienation and role confusion that is part of the stage 3-4 transition.
6. Validation of the role of lay pastoral leader when alienation occurs.

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[7] All of this is predicated on a maturely formed, reflective pastoral leader. The Aspendale leader demonstrated (and parishioners reported) gifts, skills and vulnerability that developed a sense of community and enhanced the identity of visiting priests.

[8] This may also be a leadership team following a *viri* (sic) *probati* model. *Viri* of course means "men". Either gender is assumed in the current discussion.

[9] These supervision topics emerged from the pastoral leader's story and from the experience of parishioners as they observed the pastoral leader exercise his ministry.

[10] The concept of a 'ninety percent priest' was used by participants, not in a pejorative way, to describe the role and identity of the pastoral leader.

Conclusion

The themes identified above provide significant pastoral and practical guidelines that formed the basis for additional theoretical work. Grounded theory, case study methodology and theological reflection based on library research were used to develop the thematically organised data noted above into a number of hypotheses for testing by future research. Chapter Six (*Key Findings and the Implications for Practice)* highlights these hypotheses and in addition, makes suggestions as to further research questions that emerged from the Aspendale project.[11]

[11] The next chapter (Chapter Four: *Locating the Aspendale Story*) provides an extended, secondary literature review stimulated by the themes that emerged in the summary noted above. The outcomes of this review are also incorporated in Chapter Six in the form of hypotheses and research questions.

CHAPTER 4

Locating the Aspendale Story

4.1 Evaluating the Influence of Contemporary Themes

Sofield and Juliano are committed to enabling and sustaining collaborative ministry because "[w]e should; we want to; we can; we will" (1987, 134). They note the continuing shortage of priests and provide an important set of evaluative criteria that articulate an operational theology of this emerging style of ministry. They describe precisely what the Aspendale project sought to explore:

- the *experience* of a people in transition;
- the task of education and reflection that sustains them on the journey (134–135).

This chapter reviews the local, regional and global conversation between these two perspectives as the wider Catholic Church and the Aspendale parish in particular responded to one of the new ministry paradigms. Sofield and Juliano's four stages are revised and set out below in both a qualitative and historically descriptive way. It is important to note that Stages 3 and 4 reflect many of the themes that emerged from the Aspendale data. I have italicised the description used earlier to highlight the historical perspective (18–19) and then I indicate the relevance of the emergent data to the particular stage.

1. Stage 1. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the rigid hierarchical model did not value collaborative ministry. (*The Second Vatican Council calls the Church to a life of holiness, ministry and community.*)

2. Stage 2. Obsession with talking and writing about collaboration produces little concrete action. (*Twenty years of experience worldwide as the Catholic Church sponsored, exercised and wrestled with an evolving set of ministry paradigms.*)

3. Stage 3. Anxiety about outcomes blends with belief in this new way of ministering together. Ambivalence characterises this stage. (*Education, dialogue and reflection engage those at parish and diocesan level who are promoting, exploring and researching these new patterns of ministry and the impact on contemporary trends.*)

Commentary. In Melbourne, the long process of research, reporting, reflection and decision-making that led to the appointment of the Lay Pastoral Leader put an end to the era of merely "writing about". The Pastoral Leadership Board (PLB) and the Tomorrow's Church Report ensured that the experiment (or Pilot Project) would commence. The expected ambivalence was addressed by two key documents at a diocesan level through *Questions and Answers* (PLB, May 1995), and at a local level through the *Transition Times*, an Aspendale newsletter for special news on the project.[1] Words like 'interim' (Eg. Interim Parish Council) and 'transition' (Transition Team and *Transition Times*) abounded and clearly expressed the reality of Stage 3 "ambivalence", but effective communication, sound research, good process and collaborative decision-making created a sense of security.[2] The "impact on contemporary trends" became a point of research as my study of Aspendale was commissioned by the PLB.[3]

4. Stage 4. Commitment to collaboration as an operational norm is strong, even when difficult to sustain. (*Commitment to collaboration as an operational norm is characterised by a willingness to persevere with new models of ministry even when implementation is difficult.*) **Commentary.** Chapter 1 highlighted the chronology and demographics of the Aspendale project, including the change in Archbishop and consequent shift in policy. Chapter 3 analysed the data from parishioners and the Pastoral Leader. Consider the following summary of emergent themes that resonate with Sofield and Juliano's contention and that will be referred to as a wider literature unfolds. (i) A balanced mutuality and affirmation of each other's identity sustained the tension between the perceived minimalist role of visiting priests and the role of the Pastoral Leader. (ii) Grieving parishioners were given space to express their loss in the midst of change. (iii) Skills in theological reflection, modelled in part by the Pastoral Leader himself, enabled many participants to manage paradox and

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[1] The 18 questions in the PLB document served to allay many fears and took the anxiety of parishioners seriously as the dialogue and plans progressed. The regular *Transition Times* featured local people and blended news, opinion, interviews and letters. They provided an excellent tone of balance, adventure, challenge and pastoral sensitivity. Difficulties were not avoided and the possibilities were not exaggerated.

[2] I have on file many documents from this active (rather than Stage 2 - passive) phase such as: Aspendale Transition Priorities – short-term, medium-term, long-term; The Role of the Interim Parish Council; Discernment Group – Minutes; Parish Assembly Planning – Minutes.

[3] PLB minutes (1995) record that "a cost-effective way to conduct research would be to fund a PhD scholarship ..." that is focused on the Pilot Projects.

ambiguity. (iv) A living, breathing community supported the necessary dialogue that allowed for the pain of transition and created formative feedback. (v) Collaborative ministry flourished, and when transitional leadership at a diocesan level did not match transitional leadership at a parish level the parish remained firm in its identity and resolve. (vi) When the diocese failed to supply a Sacramental Minister and the reality of a large roster of visiting priests threatened to undermine the perceived role of these priests, the maturity of the Pastoral Leader and the parishioners meant that neither priests nor leader were diminished in role or identity. (vii) In spite of the limitations of the "*crook model*", perceived and experienced by most parties, the reflective capacity of participants engaged theological issues with hope, creativity, a sense of adventure and respect for tradition. (viii) There were many ambiguities but they were found to be manageable because at the local level people were exploring the boundaries of collaborative ministry.

The reflection of Stage 4 in the experience of those involved in the Aspendale Pilot highlighted, in a positive sense, the truth of George Wilson's assertion that in parish leadership a "relationship is never the result of one party's agency only. Both parties, by their *inter*-action, co-cause the reality" (2007, 13). The section that follows expresses the integration of this 'co-causal' process with wider Church experience.

4.1.1 Historico-theological survey and the Aspendale findings

These last two stages of collaborative ministry, and the accompanying data and analysis, have a much broader historical and theological background than can be identified in fundamental themes the Second Vatican Council espoused. Kilmartin highlights a number of factors that later found a variety of expressions and reactions depending on sociological, cultural and theological responses to the shortage of priests.

- The sacramental basis for partnership in the threefold mission of Christ.
- The basic equality of the faithful, the whole people of God.
- The charismatic dimension of the Church's life and witness.
- The missiological distinction between Church and world.
- The diverse relationships between laity and hierarchy (1981, 92–95).

Teaching on the role and identity of lay people also stimulated the dynamic interaction between these five factors in diocesan and parish practice. Due to the stimulus of the

shortage of priests the Archdiocese of Melbourne researched and planned from 1990–1995 around these five themes and expressed this in the *Tomorrow's Church Report* (1994). Since 1965, the focus of *Lumen Gentium* on baptism, confirmation and incorporation into the Church (nos. 7, 11, 14) had emphasised that the people of God share in the threefold mission of Christ to teach, to sanctify and to govern (no. 31).[4] This section will now describe how this fertile but problematic context gave birth to a variety of expressions of ministry, a proliferation of titles for new and developing roles, and many different responses to the implications for the Church.

Just after the Aspendale project concluded, *Compass* focused on collaborative ministry and included an article by Terry Curtin, the Aspendale Pastoral Leader, the "first non-ordained married man in Australia to head a parish" (2001, 13). The editor reflected on Pastoral Associates as one of many forms of ministry at this stage in the history of the Catholic Church.[5]

> The primary reason - but usually not the primary motive - for developing this kind of ministry is the fact that it should never have been missing from church life in the first place ... The second reason - and the stimulus that is hastening the development at the present time - is the shortage of ordained priests and the concern to ensure that the spiritual and sacramental needs of the people will continue to be provided for (Brundell 2001, 1).

As the Aspendale project developed from 1996 to its conclusion in 1999, significant contemporary studies detailed the nature and implications of the shortage of priests in Australia (Dixon 1995; Cashen 1998; Dixon and Bond 2000; 2001). The *Tomorrow's Church: Discussion Document* set the scene, observing

> a decline in the number of priests available to serve in the Archdiocese. Given the increasing age of priests and the small numbers of men training for the priesthood, the decline shows no sign of abating ... in 1993, one Melbourne parish is without a resident parish priest. If trends continue, more than a quarter of the 233 parishes will be in a similar situation within 20 years (1993, 1).

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[4] *Lumen Gentium* expresses the conciliar image of the Church as the People of God and affirms that God has entrusted them with the mission of Christ.

[5] Brundell worked with a religious sister who served as a Parish-Coordinator and not a Pastoral Associate, notwithstanding the publication in July 2000 of the *Preliminary Report on Parish Pastoral Associates* based on the Catholic Church Life Survey of 1996. This illustrates the confusion and proliferation (comfortable for some, uncomfortable for others) of titles being used.

Dean Hoge's early North American study provides a broader canvas and was typical of responses to the shortage of priests. He concludes a survey of interpretative variables based on sociological, cultural and theological factors with the comment that the biggest losers are bishops

> since they lose their professional leadership corps and are faced with a decline in leadership quality. The priests themselves seem to be losers more than winners but many priests have no feelings on the question. The laity are not yet affected very much, and most don't have any attitudes at all about the priest shortage. The main winners are those laity who want more participation in Church ministry or who hope for changes in church structures (1987, 30).

According to Hoge laity see opportunity rather than pain, and clergy are non-committal. The measured urgency generated by the *Tomorrow's Church* process, only six years after Hoge's study, had an affect on the Aspendale respondents. For parishioners the tension between pain or grief and a sense of opportunity was a key theme that was balanced by respect and compassion for visiting priests. In a spirit of mutuality, the priests responded with interest and support, a collegiality noted by parishioners. The Pastoral Leader experienced some ambivalent reactions to his role but many priests were positive and encouraging. All participants owned the dilemma and they were certainly aware of the unfolding statistics described below. I note one parishioner's typical description that the relationship was one of "share[d] friendship and mutual respect" and "complementarity" as the PL helped the "priests do what they do best."

Richard Schoenherr and Lawrence Young predicted that from 1966 to 2006 there would be a decline of forty percent in available diocesan priests in the United States (1993).[6] The *Priests Deployment Committee* in Melbourne had projected that, from 1997 to 2005, the complement of priests available for parish appointment would drop from 256 to 209, a loss of more than twenty percent (1998, 6). These statistics provide a local expression of the global problem addressed through the Aspendale appointment. In 1993, there was only one parish without a resident priest in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. However, less than 100 kilometres from Melbourne, the rural diocese of Ballarat experienced far more severe shortages. Anne McMillan, a religious sister serving as a Liturgy Coordinator, documented Sunday celebrations in the absence of a

priest back to 1987. She claimed that Catholics living in Melbourne would not even be aware that in rural communities weekly access to the sacramental life of the Church and the regular presence of an ordained priest was a thing of the past (2001). McMillan noted that in 1987, for the first time, "the priests of two parishes could no longer provide for the celebration of weekly Sunday Mass in all the Mass centres of the parish" and fourteen years later she expressed her growing frustration.

> In the intervening years, that situation has moved from being the exception to being the norm. Along the way, several parishes and smaller Mass centres were closed and various pastoral strategies were put in place to address the situations as they emerged (2001, 13).

At the beginning of this period of slow attrition in Australia, Pope John Paul II affirmed the enhanced involvement of the laity in leadership of liturgical celebrations.[7] At that stage the fine balance of negative and positive implications for priestly identity had not been fully realised and the blossoming of ministries was welcomed by many. Pope John Paul II added his affirmation.

> For this we should give thanks ... for the ministries exercised ... and assumed in virtue of the common priesthood into which they have been initiated through baptism and confirmation (1985).[8]

Almost two decades later Cozzens writes that in conjunction with priests, parish leadership was now also in the hands of religious, deacons and many lay ministers, including women. He claims that "the latter category represents a dramatic shift in the profile of parochial ministers - Catholic ministry is no longer identified solely with the ministrations of a priest" (2002, 143). Cozzens also highlights this as one of the threats that can challenge the identity of priests (3–13). This phenomenon was certainly a key factor in the experience of respondents in the Pilot Project. Their assessment provided a strong affirmation of their ability to frame these shifts in a positive way even when the

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[6] In the same period the Catholic population would grow from 45 million to 74 million.

[7] The *Tomorrow's Church: Discussion Document* projected that from 1977 - 2013 the number of priests would decline from 426 to 195 while Pastoral Associates would increase from 100 to 200 (1993, 16).

[8] Pope John Paul II. *Apostolic Letter on the 25th Anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.* Second Vatican Council. On a positive note, Paul Philibert noted that many testified to a "profound experience of the power of the Resurrection in seeing the Holy Spirit as the source of the myriad gifts given to competent laity in the Church in our day" (2004, 17).

Archdiocese failed to provide a sacramental minister. The summary of emergent themes in Section 3.3 highlights the fact that dialogue and mutuality protected the identity of all leaders, validated the unique character of their ministry, and developed a culture of humanity and self-care that sustained community in the midst of change.[9] The *St Louis News* of 12th September 1997, under the ironic heading: "Aspendale – The Priestless Parish!" lists the names of 32 priests. The editorial notes that "[s]ince TC came to Aspendale as a non-ordained Pastoral leader in January 1996, the following priests have or will soon celebrate mass in this parish or have assisted with reconciliation or baptism." This was not a negative irony, it celebrated the reality of an great team that had overcome a dominant myth.

McMillan, representing a part of the church overburdened by practical needs, continued to highlight what was essentially a worldwide dilemma, now painfully apparent in her diocese. At this stage, statistical work and strategic re-allocation of resources constituted the major mode of response, which was far short of McMillan's plea for new policies and practices, formation and nurture of lay leaders, and broader concepts of liturgical leadership. She sought to avoid the creation of "a new quasi-clerical role of leadership," a real danger if the issue is not faced squarely and creatively and if reflective practice is not exercised (16). Theological reflection, or reflective practice, provided a major thread in the fabric of the positive reframing noted above in the quotation from Section 3.3. The capacity of the Pastoral Leader in this area made a significant contribution to his avoidance of the trap of McMillan's "new quasi-clerical role of leadership". For this new role to be effective,[10] the pastoral leader[11] had to

[9] Detailed analysis in Chapter 3 found that the three-way partnership between priests, lay leader and parish provided a level of mutuality based on a parish-wide collaborative ethos that: (i) Protected, delineated and enhanced the identity of lay and ordained leaders; (ii) Preserved the identity of priests from a functional status when a lack of diocesan support may have reduced the profile of priests to a series of visitors with no pastoral identity; (iii) Offered corrective feedback to pastoral leaders whose enthusiasm and skills tended towards a 'self-sacrificing paradigm' that eroded healthy boundaries, safe practice and self-care; (iv) Modelled a level of humanity and transparency that was healthy and balanced; (v) Complemented the priest/lay leader mutuality with an ability to accept the paradox and ambiguity of parish community transition.

[10] Effectiveness is predicated on a maturely formed, reflective pastoral leader. The Aspendale leader demonstrated (and parishioners reported) gifts, skills and vulnerability that developed a sense of community and enhanced the identity of visiting priests. See Donna Markham's helpful outline of similar themes as the key elements of relational leadership (2006, 5–12).

[11] This may also be a leadership team following a *viri* (sic) *probati* model. *Viri* of course means "men". However either gender is assumed in the current discussion.

demonstrate pastoral listening skills, a credible personality, reflective practice and empathic journeying through loss.[12]

This complex issue was alluded to by a parishioner whose evaluation offers a subjective but balanced critique:

> *I feel the PL has been the best thing to happen to this parish. We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest ... we have been let down by the diocese in not having our own regular sacramental priests (as the model was meant to). We have had a wonderful and varied group of priests but I think it would be better to have 1-3 regulars who would get to know us as a parish.*

The dangers and the possibilities are enshrined in "*We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest*". Perhaps there is much that this parishioner does not appreciate about the Magisterium or the complexity of ordination and priesthood but this perception must be reckoned with.

The shortage was also felt in Melbourne and while the same people were bearing the strain they still looked forward to new options being tested.[13] Six years before McMillan's plea, Dixon's research pointed out that about half the parishes in Melbourne "employed one or more pastoral associates, with the total being 161. These are overwhelmingly women: 52 lay women and 97 religious account for 149 of the total" (1995, 8). The problem is not so much the shortage of priests or even, as Brundell has indicated, the neglect of a most basic tenet of Catholic faith and community, the right to the Eucharist. The problem goes deeper.

Dallen's worldwide survey (1994) and McMillan's field-based, Australian plea (2001) provide two chronological benchmarks for our study. They both articulate the needs of a community in danger of losing Catholicism's integral sacramentality.[14] They

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[12] As Section 3.3 indicated, the data analysis developed a helpful profile for future lay pastoral leaders serving in a similar context: (i) Credible authority based on listening skills, consonance of word and deed, a genuine mission focus and practical vision; (ii) A capacity for theological reflection that appreciates in advance the paradox of being a pastoral leader who cannot be the liturgical leader, and that takes into account his or her experience of frustration; (iii) The maturity to manage the political and theological tension in order to empathise with those who are grieving the loss of a resident priest.

[13] As an RSM sister, McMillan represents those called to stand in the gap. Curtin, as the first non-ordained man in Australia to be officially installed as head a parish, points out that nuns "had been doing so for some years without so much publicity" (2001, 13).

[14] As *Tomorrow's Church* was catching the spirit of collaborative ministry in Melbourne, Dallen's historical and contemporary review of Sundays Without A Priest (SWAP) asked critical questions a long

both lament the lack of practical and theological care for those who continued to stand in the gap after the uncertain guidance of *On Certain Questions*.

> That the pastoral leaders of communities are not ordained is not unsettling because they consequently lack the "power to confect" the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation. Rather, the denial of ordination logically operates as a refusal to recognise pastoral leaders as fully competent ministers; a refusal to recognise the communities that they lead as being capable to celebrate the Eucharist; and thereby, a refusal to recognise these communities as "church" in the full sense. The implication is that such local communities are lacking in ecclesial reality. Men are ordained who have little, if any, pastoral relationship to communities; but ministers who actually serve as pastors are denied ordination (Dallen 1994, 122).
>
> Yet the provision of appropriate training and formation, of resources for liturgy and ministry, of leadership training and structures which will provide for the needs of the local faith community do not seem to have been met by other than *ad hoc* provisions (McMillan 2001, 16).[15]

The response from Church leaders is experienced as a "refusal to recognise" the practice and praxis of ministry as a valued source of reflection and by the application of "*ad hoc* provisions" without any real attempt at dialogue. The rural Australian nun was expressing very similar sentiments to those of an Austrian bishop four years earlier who had been critical of *On Certain Questions*. Bishop Reinhold Stecher of Innsbruck charged that "for some time now we have been offering people, tacitly but in reality, a non-sacramental way of salvation" and the omission of the homily because no ordained person is available seems incomprehensible, and for him

> it is difficult to see why a theologically educated and dedicated lay minister should be forbidden to preach. ... My real concern is the refusal to recognise the actual pastoral situation in so many countries ... and the refusal to recognise the importance of the Eucharist for the Christian community and for the Church (1997, 1668).

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time before McMillan wrote on behalf of rural Australia: "Does it make a difference whether a community celebrates the Eucharist or whether its members receive communion at SWAP? Will the absence of the Eucharist alter the church's sense of identity and mission? How will Catholic spirituality, always sacramental in character, be affected if it lacks the Eucharist as its foundation? Can the church continue on the direction it set for itself at the Second Vatican Council without celebrating the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day" (1994, ix–x)?

[15] Dixon and Bond's research on the development and practice of pastoral associates in Melbourne found little improvement. In fact it was "difficult to stay in pastoral associate work for financial reasons, and also ... difficult to move to a new position ... many do not have written job descriptions and most do not have written contracts. ... In the absence of such conditions, there is likely to be a more rapid turnover ... and consequently slower growth in the quality of this form of ministry" (2001, 7).

Stecher is reflecting something of Rahner's realism where "the ordinary Magisterium of the Pope in authentic doctrinal decisions, at least in the past and up to very recent times, was often involved in error" (1981, 53). Like Congar, he hopes that the Church might do theological reflection "in the context of worship, in an atmosphere of mutual criticism" (1977, 20). Stecher pleads the pastoral case for the priests with the same passion as McMillan. He recounts the story of the bishop who said to him with a smile, "In our diocese every priest has three parishes - and things run splendidly."

> That most reverend gentleman has never had responsibility for even one parish, let alone three. If he had, he could hardly have made such a light-hearted remark. In France I have met worn-out, exhausted priests who have to attend to seven or even ten parishes ... Few bishops know what these priests face with the result that their experiences and frustration are never represented at the Church's highest level ... all energies are devoted to defending the existing rules as in this latest decree ... We cannot have a Church in which those in the highest positions worry about every speck in the eyes of people in the local communities but not about the plank in their own (1668–1669).

By June 2001, the Australian National Liturgical Commission had received early data from the inquiry into *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*. Out of a total of 28 Dioceses there were 21 where Catholic communities regularly participated in such celebrations.[16] Dallen had wrestled with the implications of this loss seven years earlier where the data from Europe, the Third World and the United States indicated that for them it had been a much deeper and longer running problem (1994, v–xiii, 1–29).

Notwithstanding the metropolitan/rural divide over their different experiences and the dissimilar pace of the loss of priests, Australia had arrived more slowly and recently to the point of crisis and the urgency of the statistics was masked by local factors. However, the situation was worsening.

> From 1971-1991 the total number of priests had fallen only about twelve percent since 1971, but this modest drop obscures the dramatic change in the clergy age

[16] In Ballarat the situation was deteriorating. The Winter 2004 edition of *Our Diocesan Community*, reported that of the 52 parishes in the diocese, 17 did not have a resident priest. Five of these had Parish Leaders but 12 had neither Parish Leader nor Priest.

> profile, and the fact that retired priests make up an increasing proportion of the total (Dixon, 1995, 8).[17]

The Aspendale project was located in the midst of this growing awareness but there was no sense of panic. The *Tomorrow's Church* process was carefully measured, researched and practical and the concept of Lay Pastoral Leader was neither new nor untested. However there was anxiety for some and uncertainty for many regarding how the role should be developed and

> whether the *professionalisation* of lay ministries is really the most appropriate path for us to take as a Church ... and whether *clericalisation* of lay ministries tends to accompany any process of professionalisation, leading to both an unwelcome barrier between the lay minister and the people, and an undermining of the identity and role of the priest (Dixon 1995, 9).

Dixon raised questions that the Aspendale project was intended to explore. Whereas my earlier quotation dealt cognitively and theologically with the concept of a "new quasi-clerical role of leadership" (Mcmillan 2001, 16) there was also a deep emotional response that emerged. Feelings of grief and loss, anxiety and uncertainty were reported but respondents, observing the relationship of mutuality between their Pastoral Leader and priests, identified a remarkable quality. Parishioners experienced a sense of security and reconciling presence in the midst of paradox. This security enabled the expression of grief, anxiety and questions in the absence of diocesan affirmation for the model.[18]

The change of policy alluded to in points 4 and 5 (see f/n 18 below) was catalysed by the change of Archbishop. This in turn curtailed the possibility of a qualitative dialogue designed to address the questions in Dixon's research or at least add to the debate. The resilience of the parish and participants' ability to manage the ambivalence of the new

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[17] Twenty-two percent of all diocesan priests were either retired or on leave in 1995. In Ballarat the statistics are alarming for the years 1991 - 2004. "Because of retirement, death, ministry outside the diocese and resignations, there are 39 less priests in active ministry than there were in 1991" (Driscoll 2005, 24). At the end of 2004 there were 41 priests engaged in active full-time ministry, two in chaplaincy and one on study leave. This statistic represents almost a fifty percent drop in numbers over 13 years. This is the hard data behind McMillan's story.

[18] Parishioners indicated through data analysis in Section 3.3 that an observed mutuality between priest and lay leader provided: (i) Safety and holding for those struggling with ambiguity; (ii) A place to express a sense of loss or grief in not having a resident priest; (iii) A place to normalise the tension and anxiety of liminal experiences during a paradigm shift; (iv) A pastoral presence that witnesses to reconciliation in the midst of alienating change; (v) A sense of security and strength for mission when there may be no corresponding diocesan collegiality.

model can be seen in the following excerpt from a letter to the Archbishop (November 10, 1997) that affirmed parishioners' satisfaction with the model and current leadership.

> In regard to our long-term future, we have noted your willingness to be open to the possibility of retaining our current model provided that it continues to work well. You conveyed this in your message to us at the time of our Parish Assembly in December 1996. We would like to request that you now give a more positive endorsement that ... the existing arrangements may continue as long as the parish feels it can function adequately under them.

Due to the successful development of parish life and mission the model was given a one-year extension. Camille Paul of the Catholic Institute of Sydney had challenged the Church to introduce a key factor in stage 3-4 transition arguing that positive, affirming

> actions are needed *now* to encourage the laity. There have been more than enough words. There must also be the will to fully implement such actions, by both the Church hierarchy and all the People of God (1995, 100).

This factor had become a part of the motivation for the Pilot Project and for this study and aligns neatly with Sofield and Juliano's Stage 2 where obsession with talking and writing about collaboration produces little concrete action. Here at Aspendale we have a Stage 4 process where the laity are asking for more time and more nerve on the part of those in authority. Paul had written an earlier response to *Christifideles Laici* detailing feminist concerns with consultation where "the consulter owns the game" noting that the time allocated for the consultation

> as well as the topic and its focus, are decided by the consulter. The material collected is then synthesised by a small group of (usually) unknown people. This group then decides what is important and to be included in the submission ... But what are the safeguards that issues that are constantly raised ... will be included (1989, 413)?[19]

The *Tomorrow's Church: Discussion Document* reported that 13 follow-up meetings with 1,600 people saw the parish as the foremost priority. "Organisation, the role of priests, the involvement of the laity and the effectiveness of the parish community" were identified as key factors and included in the final plans (1993, 15). The Aspendale

[19] Earlier discussion of the *Priests Deployment Committee: Draft Report* (1998) concluded that much of the feedback was either ignored of discounted. Later surveys found people resistant to a process of consultation because of "dissatisfaction with the outcomes of similar past initiatives" (2005, 5).

project offered diocesan support and provided a positive, experimental response to the shortage of priests. However Dallen explains the motivation behind similar projects but warns of the cost to missional identity as SWAP begins to impact, and communion from the reserved sacrament

> seems sufficiently eucharistic to be acceptable as a substitute. But it is not. People - the Church - receive something less for their nourishment than they need in order to remain fully the body of Christ serving the world (1994, 143).[20]

Here we have a warning that complements the Pastoral Leader's statement to the selection panel that, in the desire to avoid SWAP, the Pilot project offered "*a crook model of Church*" that in fact compromised the lay leader and challenged the identity of the community. During consecutive interviews the Pastoral Leader highlighted the paradox and tension.

> *Under our particular purpose the person who presides, the Catholic regime if you like, the relationship between the presider of the Eucharist and the person who homilises or preaches the word is a very strong connection ... this is an important connection.*

> *People respond to pastoral presence more than grand ideas ... the pastor is there for leadership in liturgy and for ideals but unless the pastoral presence is there the response doesn't follow. The situation of course is that I don't lead in the major liturgies.*

It is significant that one of the recommended supervision topics that emerged from the Pastoral Leader's story and from the observations of parishioners focused on the proposition that: Loyalty to the Church's teaching through Canon Law and the Magisterium is constantly in tension with one's identity as a 'ninety percent' priest.[21] In a letter to the Archbishop on 22nd September 1998, the pastoral leader accepted the one-year extension, noted the regional plans for the future and stated the "*preference would be to continue as a separate parish, however we appreciate that this may not be feasible.*" The following section now re-examines the strategic decisions behind the

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[20] Dallen describes the loss of the sacramental consciousness that enables Catholics to recognise God in Christ and in daily life (1994, 31–53). This enervating correlation is complex. Aidan Kavanagh's discussion of liturgy and ecclesial consciousness concludes that for Christians "to give up their sacramental sense would be like language giving up on metaphor: either surrender would mean that whole areas of reality could no longer be given voice" (1983, 13).

[21] As already noted in Section 3.3, the concept of a 'ninety percent priest' was used by participants, not in a pejorative way, to describe the role and identity of the pastoral leader.

appointment and this dilemma will again be considered from the perspective of the parishioners who experienced the model.

4.1.2 Aspendale: a strategic response

It is important to re-visit the fact that the appointment of a Lay Pastoral Leader was based upon an integrated model of collaborative ministry and reflection at a diocesan level involving bishops, priests and laity. There was a clear historical sequence.

- 1985. The Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning (CROPP) initiated an extensive consultation with the laity.
- 1990. The Future of Parishes Committee responded to this consultation. They focused on 22 regional Deaneries using a discussion paper: *Pastoral Planning for the Future of Parish Leadership*. Regional bishops attended "listening sessions".[22] Key features included availability of Sunday Eucharist, the rejection of parish-closure as a response to the decline in clergy,[23] and an affirmation of the great opportunity and challenge for lay people.
- 1992. The Archbishop, the Personnel Advisory Board and the Senate of Priests consulted clergy "about clustering parishes as a response to the declining number of priests." Priests (i) saw widespread implementation as too limited and likely to lead to unreasonable workloads; (ii) urged extensive consultation with all people before any changes occurred; (iii) and advised an overall development plan. This is recorded in the *Tomorrow's Church: Discussion Document* (1993, 15).
- 1993. This document introduced five models using clear demographics, application of Church teaching, excellent graphics and theological commentary:
    - Multi-Parish Priest
    - Multi-Parish Team

[22] This reflects Kevin Matthew's discussion of consultation from a canonical perspective (1990, 319–342). For Kimmerling, consultation usually invites one party to reveal their stories, ideas, priorities and concerns. Consultation is not synonymous with listening. At best it is "like a hearing-aid which enables leaders to tune in to the voices of ordinary Church members ... it is not during the act of consultation but only after the ultimate decision has been handed down, that the true mind of the consulter is revealed" (1986, 549). The *Tomorrow's Church* process indicates that the people of Melbourne had been heard. Their suggestions became part of the experiment. It was concerning when a sharp adjustment in policy and practice did not review data from Aspendale.

[23] However if a community ceased to be viable then closure was an acceptable option.

- Non-Ordained Pastoral Leader
- Deanery Community
- Parish Amalgamation

The Aspendale option, Non-Ordained Pastoral Leader is discussed more fully in the next section where the demographics and theological perspectives are compared with the international context. The *Discussion Document* notes that over time "many ministries became overly concentrated in the ordained priest" but ministry in partnership with a priest is now described as

> those public activities which are undertaken ... by a baptised person appointed to that service with a view to carrying out the Church's mission. This understanding affirms the reality of non-ordained ministries and challenges parish communities to call forth, commission and support those people who have gifts for ministry ... leadership involves an interaction between leaders and followers designed to accomplish their common purpose (1993, 5).

Christifideles Laici (n. 23) uses the term "ministry" in several ways. It sometimes applies only to ordained ministry, at other times it includes all forms of Christian service.[24] Kenan Osborne notes that the Vatican II documents restricted the word "ministry" to the three offices of the ordained ministry. He noted that the documents of Vatican II

> consistently employ[ed] the term 'apostolate'. This distinction of terms - 'ministry' = ordained; 'apostolate' = unordained - was deliberately done to indicate the "essential difference" between the ordained and unordained ministries in the Church. However, after the council closed, this distinction in naming has not been followed, even by documents which have come from the Roman curia itself (1988, 324).

In the same year that the Aspendale project concluded, Woods referred to *On Certain Questions* and suggested that the word "ministry" was "generally used to refer to almost any service in the Church despite the Vatican's efforts to restrict its meaning" (2000, 176). Such ambiguity tends to lead to confusion of role-definition and identity. However *Christifideles Laici* itself sets up the problem.

[24] Collins defines the problems and inconsistencies of this ambivalence (1990; 1992; 2002). He suggests that the practice of ministry, given the explosion of roles and tasks for the laity, will inevitably challenge the theory or theology that underlies the practice.

> Pastors ... ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful and ... can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of Orders ... the exercise of such tasks does not make Pastors of the lay faithful: in fact, a person is not a minister simply in performing a task, but through sacramental ordination (n. 23).

Therefore theory and practice are often experienced in conflicted ways. Sometimes lay leaders in parishes without a priest are distinguished from priests simply because they do not preside at the Eucharist, reconciliation and anointing. This was certainly the view of the Aspendale Pastoral Leader in his comment, noted above, on the "*crook model*". Dallen asks a relevant question.

> Does this mean that the pastoral functions of lay pastors are not sacramental and priestly and, consequently, that the only sacramental and priestly functions that a priest has are presiding at these sacraments? Or, if we reject this cultic-functionary view of ministerial priesthood as untenable in the light of history and Vatican II, why do we not admit that the commissioning of lay pastors to an office more significant than the diaconate is, or can be, sacramental (1994, 121)?

This highlights another theme from the Aspendale project. Parishioners experienced the lay leader's activities in a pastoral/sacramental way that will not disappear simply because a note in *Christifideles Laici* suggests the leader is merely "performing a task". They inevitably began to imagine a scenario that challenged the status quo. The following illustrative quotations from parishioners name the tensions (2 and 3) and offer possible solutions (1 and 4).

1. *I feel the PL role should either be given the choice of being ordained and so choose this if [they] sees it as his or her calling and so takes on a full role as an assistant to the parish priest (or as a layperson paid accordingly).*
2. *I would prefer the priest and not the PL to give the preachings*
3. *I would like to see ... more weekday Masses if possible.*
4. *This is the best that could be in the circumstances. I long for the day though when our PL will lead our Eucharist. I think our model doesn't make sense.*

This tension reflected the climate of an identity crisis for priests (indicated in the ambivalent anxiety of parishioners) in Australia that had been influenced by a secularised culture, a sad history of excessive clericalisation and ambiguous teaching of an historically inadequate interpretation of the role of priest (Thornhill 1990, 206). John

Thornhill issues a wise warning to those who see the shortage of priests or confusion in identity simply as an opportunity for the laity to develop. This negative analysis respects neither lay nor ordained by offering a 'default' interpretation of developments, because properly understood.

> ... all of these developments can prove a liberation, an invitation to appropriate more profoundly than ever before our vocation to servant leadership, a vocation which places us with Christ in the midst of the life of his people (205–206).

Notwithstanding the "*crook model*", according to parishioners the Pastoral Leader "*never set himself as the equivalent of a priest ... he always welcomes them as: The minister who will lead us in the liturgy*". There were many theological tensions but the relationship between priests and Pastoral Leader was mutually respectful. It pointed the way to some measure of Thornhill's "liberation" or "invitation to appropriate more profoundly" a shared but different vocational response to Christ's call. This tension was highlighted by a parishioner at the time of the limited extension of the appointment by the new Archbishop.

> *He has done a superb job. Sadly he is not a priest, cannot celebrate Mass and, although I am sure he would hear the sins of many people, he cannot absolve sins. He is a good example of a layman who could be ordained - if he wanted it and the Church accepted him. But that's for the Church to decide.*

Approximately a decade of research, planning and theological reflection accompanied Melbourne's response. It was anticipated that experimentation with the five models, in conjunction with reflective theological dialogue, would sustain and guide the Archdiocese. The process was consultative and respectful towards all parties and, while seriously addressing the issues, was not beset by anxiety and peremptory decision-making. Leadership personnel on the *Pastoral Leadership Task Group* were representatively balanced.[25] Whatever the outcome of the various models, there was a positive, collegial and reconciling spirit that found an echo in the opinions of those who attended the parish of St Louis and experienced the process and the ministry.

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[25] The Chair was a Bishop and the Secretary a lay parish planner. The *Discussion Document* lists nine other members including three women: a bishop, four priests, three lay people and one religious sister (1993, 14).

1. *He has achieved the impossible [task] of uniting all groups in the parish and presenting them a common goal - the spreading of the word of God.*
2. *St. Louis is a 'growing together' community and much healing has gone on since the PL came.*
3. *The PL ... has had the ability to bring the parish together - it is now a more united parish.*
4. *There was always a gap between school and parishioners before the PL came.*
5. *This has been his sole goal - to make the parish work as a whole.*

From the top down, Archbishop to Pastoral Leader, diocese to parish, there was a consistency that recognised a sense of dialogue and community health that could have been further developed if current policy had been different.

4.1.3 Melbourne: confronting the international statistics

Ethnographic studies assume that institutions and social activity are deeply intertwined but this "does not mean that they are somehow dissolved into each other, even though they are interdependent" (Layder 1993, 57). "Social activity" in this report refers to all four of Sofield and Juliano's stages of development. In a very different context, an ethnographic study of a London-based counselling institute evaluated the professional culture, management roles and organisational morality. The research focused on organisational rules and professional codes (c/f Vatican teaching in our study) and how they were used by practitioners. The findings emphasised the importance of professional values engaging rules with a degree of flexibility. This encouraged practitioners to see rules and codes as external resources they could invest with their own judgment (Nijsmans 1991).

This current study sought to discern how "institutions and face-to-face activities are interdependent while, at the same time, possessing rather different characteristics" (Layder 1993, 57). However a local parish cannot prevent globalising forces from impacting on the local experience and introducing qualitative changes therefore one of the tasks of theological reflection is to discover the lines of influence.

> The local situation may indeed feel itself overwhelmed by the global ... But local situations are not powerless either ... the important point for cultural (and theological) production becomes the line of encounter between the local and the global, where the two come up against each other (Schreiter 1997, 12).

Supplementary data from parishioners illustrate this dichotomy but also reveal the tension between a sense of powerlessness and a sense of creative hope.

1. *We fully approve of the PL. I think it shows that married men can be priests. How can the hierarchy ignore what is obviously God's will?*
2. *He has done a superb job. Sadly he is not a priest, cannot celebrate Mass and, although I am sure he would hear the sins of many people, he cannot absolve sins. He is a good example of a layman who could be ordained - if he wanted it and the Church accepted him. But that's for the Church to decide.*
3. *The PL has recently been in hospital. However priests in other parishes have no doubt been ill also therefore this factor should not weigh in the balance against him. On the contrary, with a rapidly ageing clergy, it suggests that more pastoral leaders may be required to ease the burdens of those workers who are already bearing the brunt of the work.*
4. *The PL is always available and works extremely hard for this parish - if married priests were allowed he would be an ideal candidate.*

For the parishioners there is an evident shift from observation to reflection to praxis. One of the conclusions of a focus group provides a succinct summary of the capacity of the 'local' to manage the 'global'.

> *We fully approve of our PL.* (Affirmation). *It shows that married men can be priests.* (Hypothesis). *How can the hierarchy ignore what is obviously God's will?*" (Desire for dialogue).[26]

Having outlined the interaction between the institution and various elements of the surrounding social activity, a focus on the much wider demographic pressures represented by statistical evidence offers cameos of difference and similarity with the

[26] From Section 3.1.6.3. Affirmation was based on the PL's "deep commitment to Christ, the church and the parish [as] reflected in all facets of his life. An outstanding choice, and, hopefully, he'll be invited for a further few years further to the conclusion of his current contract." Hypothesis based on the widespread belief that the project, exemplified in the PL, was the "best thing to happen to this parish. We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest." These sentiments were common but did not match the varying levels of grief in some parishioners. Parishioners enjoyed the partnership with visiting priests and thrived under the PL's ministry as they expressed a desire for dialogue. "I feel very strongly that we have been let down by the diocese in not having our own regular sacramental priests (as the model was meant to). We've had a wonderful and varied group of priests. It would be better to have 1-3 regulars who'd get to know us." People were willing to be part of continuing debate because the PL was a good "example of a layman who could be ordained - if he wanted it and the Church accepted him." There is no parochial arrogance in this statement because it was "for the Church to decide." There was a strong belief that "if married priests were allowed, [the PL] would be an ideal candidate." People understood the pressure on the PL and suggested that "more Pastoral Leaders may be required to ease the burdens of those workers who are already bearing the brunt of the work." Notwithstanding the dilemma of eucharistic and pastoral leadership, they "had the benefit of so many wonderful and different priests for the sacraments. We are truly blessed."

Aspendale context. Discussion of the wider context begins with my own experience as a teacher involved in formation work in a Protestant Seminary and studying formation in another tradition. I own a sobering copy of *Concilium*, March 1980, entitled *The Right of a Community to a Priest.* I commenced teaching in 1990 and the message to me within its pages was "Read this and prepare for the inevitable!" even though there are significant ecclesiological and theological differences between my own tradition and that of the Catholic Church.[27] In 1977 over 1,200 parishes in France were having regular Sunday assemblies without a priest (Brulin 1980, 30). The number of Austrian parishes without a priest tripled between 1950 and 1976 (Kerkhofs 1980, 6). A similar problem had been emerging in Africa but for different reasons. Raymond Hickey outlined resistance to a European analysis of the African dilemma and argued for the development of "an auxiliary priesthood" (1982, 127). Hickey claimed that

> the choice of the word 'auxiliary' is important as it indicates that each priest ordained in this manner would exercise his priesthood under the direction of a professional seminary-trained priest ... would not be placed in charge of a parish but rather a sub-parish, and would always be subject to the bishop (79).

The place of lay discernment and formation (the local parish or community) thus becomes the place of vocational validation. This practical proposal resolves Dallen's theological anomaly of lay leaders, performing many of the pastoral tasks of priests and inviting the question: "Does this mean that the pastoral functions of lay pastors are not sacramental and priestly" (1994, 121)? Hickey argues that both lay and ordained would be affirmed and their complementarity respected because in the "system of priestly ministry which is proposed for the Church in Africa, there would be equal need for both seminary-trained and auxiliary priests" (84). In many African dioceses rapid expansion challenged bishops as far back as 1969. They rejected any attempt to introduce European experiments to solve the problem.[28] Hickey suggests that while "the problems facing the priesthood in these continents can also be felt in Africa," each diocese and each

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[27] Our own vocations began to decline in the mid-1990s. The trend was hidden by the large number of lay students (in contrast to "intending ordination candidates") enrolled in theology and ministry classes. A shortage of ordained ministers suitable for parish positions appeared in 2002. In 2005, since the local church is the calling and appointing body, some ministers are unplaced. This is seen as a comment by Churches on their suitability for ministry.

[28] Cardinal Zougrana of Upper Volta is cited in *The Tablet* of 9th August 1969. He "vehemently denounced those who tried to foist what he described as pseudo-problems upon Africa, even going so far as accusing them of wishing their experimentation to take place in Africa rather than in their own countries" (785).

continent should view their lack of immunity as an opportunity to develop local options and models that could contribute to the wider dialogue (1982, 128). Hickey's concept had similar origins to Bishop Fritz Lobinger's proposal of *viri probati*, (literally "proven men") or ordained community leaders (1980; 1998; 2000). For Lobinger, this "means married men who through marriage, general education and quality of faith have proved sufficiently that they could be considered for possible priestly ordination" (2000, 323). He assumed that the person (or group) would remain in the location of their original ministry because it was not appropriate to ordain a lone lay leader, but only teams. "Even if there is an excellent candidate in the community, he should not be ordained until there are more" (1980, 56). Apart from this proviso, many of the characteristics match the role and job description of the Aspendale position and the principle behind *viri probati* is relevant. The Pastoral Leader, summarising much of the data that appears in my own interviews, wrote several years after the project and concluded that (my emphasis),

> leadership of the community and leadership in the sacramental liturgy … were intimately linked. The leader … needs to be ordained. However the Aspendale experience suggests that a new model of priesthood could be considered. The prerequisite for ordination would not be a call to the priesthood in some generic sense, with celibacy a distinguishing characteristic, but **rather a vocation flowing from the charism of leadership in community** (Curtin 2001, 16).

Rahner writes of the de-clericalised Church as one "in which office-holders in joyous humility allow for the fact that the Spirit breathes where he will and that he has not arranged an exclusive and permanent tenancy with them" (1974, 57). This is particularly true when "those who love, are unselfish, and have a prophetic gift in the Church, constitute the real Church and are far from being always identified with the office-holders" (56–57) or those who are not ordained. Consider the following appraisal that expresses a common sentiment.

> … *our Pastoral Leader has always been accessible to all parishioners and no doubt the spiritual and religious life of our people will continue to grow with his presence.*

One insight from the Pastoral Leader himself complements this appraisal:

> *I got the sense that there was something happening out there, rather than something that you would be committed to actually bringing about, for example, the kind of change that might happen.*

This tentative, exploratory insight found a stronger expression in a later interview:

> *People respond to pastoral presence more than grand ideas ... the pastor is there for leadership in liturgy and for ideals but unless the pastoral presence is there the response doesn't follow. The situation of course is that I don't lead in the major liturgies.*

If, as *Lumen Gentium* teaches, the Church is ruled and guided by its Risen Lord acting through the Spirit who dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful (n. 4), then the implications for dialogue suggest what I would describe as a 'listening collegiality' that pays attention to the signs of change.[29] For Gleeson, collegiality is a shared responsibility for the whole church. Christians are "co-responsible for and working together for the good of the Church, the whole people of God" thus adding a qualitative dimension through the concept of communion which is "having in common, sharing together, being in fellowship, being united and being joined together" (2003, 9). Whether it is Hickey's Africa, Lobinger's Philippines or Australia's Aspendale, the task is to explore through research, reflection and dialogue what the Spirit has to say about an "exclusive and permanent tenancy." Rahner suggests that a priest or bishop must be someone "who can let other minds count in the Church" (1973, 158–159), and a listening collegiality is necessary for authentic community. This ideal was not experienced by the Pastoral Leader as noted in the quotation below but it was anticipated in hope by the Parish Assembly resolution of November 26 1997.[30]

> *My experience has reinforced my conviction and made it stronger and personal ... there's a feeling you're not really wanted ... you are a bit of an embarrassment. I have the feeling the Archbishop would be happy if it fell over, if the experiment didn't work. His priority is to boost priesthood and the image is lifted morale ... a high theology of priesthood. The focus is on the 'alter christus'.*

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[29] In an appeal for more collegial leadership Gleeson cites another reference to *Lumen Gentium* where the Church, composed of a human element united to a divine element, is a human society enlivened by the Holy Spirit (n. 8). These two concepts offer a theological foundation for 'listening collegiality'.

[30] "Whatever decisions are made [by the Archbishop] we consider that they should observe the following principles: Primary leadership of the parish rests in Jesus Christ as head of the body of Christ. The appointed leader, priest or layperson, is called to discern and be faithful to the mind of Jesus Christ. Continued faithfulness to this call will ensure an ongoing expression of Christian community at St Louis. St Louis de Montfort Parish, Aspendale, should neither be suppressed nor merge with another parish is such a way that it loses its separate identity." November 26 1997. Parish Assembly.

In the same reality-checking edition of *Concilium*, Joseph Komonchak listed the proliferation of lay ministries and specific activities "for which presbyteral ordination was once considered to be necessary" (1980, 45). The Church is not simply playing with sociological and demographic statistics, nor can the Church feel comfortable by playing what Komonchak describes as the "canonically exceptional" card.

> The theological questions raised by such cases are not avoided by noting that they are canonically exceptional or extraordinary. For, by all realistic expectations, they are likely to become the statistically normal situation. If they become that, it is difficult to overestimate the potential significance of the change in the self-perception of the Church and of its ministries which will result (1980, 45-46).

Komonchak foreshadows Dallen's scenario of multi-skilled lay ministers performing many of the tasks previously reserved for the priest, although he describes some of them as "non-sacramental".

> They may now preach and teach, baptise, prepare for and witness marriages, provide non-sacramental (sic) ministries of reconciliation, assist the sick and dying, conduct funeral services, administer the Eucharist, lead Sunday worship, and assume regular leadership of the community: all of the roles normally entrusted to the ordained pastor (45).

Dallen argues that in addition to co-ordinating all of parish life, many lay leaders are baptising, marrying, burying and leading Sunday worship. The leader at Aspendale performed all of these roles and in the process empowered other lay leaders and parishioners.[31] Dallen, citing John Ziegler (1987), sees no theological or historical reasons why lay people cannot be authorised to anoint the sick, whereas canon 1003 prescribes a priest only. There is also widespread precedent for the hearing of confessions (although canon 965 prescribes a priest only) and in fact, this is a common practice (1986, 117–118). Some of those receiving this ministry might perceive it to be sacramental in character even though a priest does not offer it. Others might have a

[31] Parish unity developed through the PL's "appreciation of the value of home groups" and his "encouragement to all who participate in the Mass." The enabling of vocational awareness in a context of collaborative ministry became a reality as the PL "encourag[ed] us to dream and to achieve ... this has been seen in the participation of many new people and families in areas from Church to social." The PL's "ability to get parishioners to volunteer and assist him" matched a talent for discerning "the people whose skills best meet the requirements." This "way of encouraging [parishioners] to dream and to achieve" in a context of "understanding and motivation" included a willingness to be transparent about "his own share

cognitive-emotional experience that they identify as sacramental. Aspendale parishioners experienced both responses but, whatever the reason for the response, there is enough role and identity confusion to make research, dialogue and theological reflection essential.

This evolving job specification for lay leaders is similar to that of the Lay Pastoral Leader at Aspendale.[32] It has much in common with Dixon's Melbourne survey of the roles and responsibilities of pastoral associates and appears to indicate a consistency of practical solutions if not a consistency of titles or nomenclature (1995, 9). Komonchak's statistically "normal" scenario was also beginning to appear outside Europe. In the United States, research charted the decline from 1942 onwards, and we have already noted the projection that from 1966 to 2005 the number of diocesan priests would reduce by forty percent (Schoenherr and Young, 1993).[33] Philip Murnion's more recent survey of U.S. parishes concluded that seventeen percent were elements in mergers or clusters of parishes (1999). These two pieces of research span the years of the Aspendale project and provide comparative markers for the rate and impact of the decline. According to Jan Kerkhofs, similar patterns had also continued to develop in Europe and the overall picture in the 1990s was alarming.

> Year after year the number of parishes with no resident priest is increasing: more than one third in Germany, more than 4,000 in France, several thousand in Spain, many hundreds in Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal (1997, 19).

Twenty five years after the *Concilium* edition the Strategic Working Group for Parishes in Melbourne declared that

> constant effort to promote vocations and invite priests from elsewhere will continue. Nevertheless there will be in the next decade a significant reduction in the number of priests available for appointment to parishes (2005, 1).

After a quarter of a century, the "statistically normal" is accepted even in the face of recruitment efforts. Logic dictates that a priority for lay formation be adopted,

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of problems." The PL was "a good motivator" who listened well and was available. The PL's humanity was a motivating factor.

[32] Appendix 3. There is a strong correlation with the role of the Pastoral Leader.

[33] This indicates a drop from 35,00 to 21,000 while the Catholic population grew from 45 million to 74 million.

consultation be extended and theological reflection promoted as part of an on-going stage 3-4 transition. This logic was supported in Chapter 3 in the form of the following insights from the Aspendale data which indicated the need for:

1. A facility with flexible models of theological reflection and a commitment to complementarity and mutuality in the early formation and ministry practice of priests and lay leaders.
2. Strategic and intentional internships for lay pastoral leaders and specific support systems for those who are married are essential.
3. A commitment to training and education in the pastoral application of principles of grief and loss as the Church experiences significant changes in ministry paradigms.
4. A culture of effective, sustained dialogue.

The end of the Pilot Project in 2000 signalled the end of effective exploration and dialogue. This outcome was affirmed five years later in the Minutes of the Senate of Priests of the Archbishop of Melbourne (13th December 2005). The pioneering role of the Pastoral Leader was affirmed and it was noted that the spirit of extensive consultation, education of laity for leadership and role clarification for priests that had existed now seemed to have disappeared.

> Several references were made to the 'Tomorrow's Church [Report]': A Plan for Leadership Report which was tabled in 1994 and which dealt with many issues and questions which are being presently raised. ... Since then the experience of change in structure and leadership had been perceived as one of imposition and not consultation as far as parishioners are concerned. ... The proper development of lay leadership should be seen as enabling future growth to happen rather than be considered a threat to the pastoral and ministerial role of the priest (7–8).

This section from the Minutes provides an interesting historical note.

Hoge's comprehensive survey of world-wide Catholic data covering 1965-1983, outlined the rapid decline both in the numbers of priests available and the numbers of vocations (1987, 3–36).[34] New Zealand priest Patrick Dunn wrestled with Hoge's data and his eleven options for pastoral leadership (1990, 120–135). Dunn evaluates these options and takes a "closer look at the legitimacy of the clergy-laity distinction within

the Church" (172). He highlights the key themes of the shortage of priests and the impact on both priests and parish community. In adopting a traditional understanding of priestly identity he fails to suspend this preference in order to engage in effective dialogue and reflection. His goal of developing "serious consideration of possible future directions" is limited by a position that does not dialogue with the pain and frustration of parishes and lay leaders (17). It may not be important what particular theological position is espoused, but it is important to consider the experience of the People of God, gathered in worship or scattered in mission and as the minutes of the Senate of Priests indicated above, the priority of consultation is often disregarded.[35] Similar themes appear in Dallen's analysis of SWAP but he argues that the loss of the opportunity to share around the Table so that Jesus can make the faithful his Body and shape them in his image is profound.[36] He cautions that

> continuing the present policy is a choice, and it is one that is a more radical departure from tradition than changing the ordination discipline. It necessarily means the diminishment of a church that has always given pride of place to expressing its sacramental character in celebrating the Eucharist (1994, 143).

Dunn's questions from the early 1980s found a much broader set of questions in Dallen's historical and contemporary concerns, and they were also reflected at Aspendale when the priest-roster was hard to fill. We have already noted the *St Louis Newsletter* of 12th September 1997 and the list of 32 visiting priests. This number grew to 41 with several 'regulars' but many occasional visits. These questions became part of the Terms of Reference for the *Tomorrow's Church* process, notwithstanding the fact that

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[34] Industrialised western nations and the African and South American continents reported similar patterns. Over the previous two decades only Poland, Ireland and the Philippines reported an increase in vocations (Hoge, 1987, 15).

[35] Dunn's section headings indicate the key themes: The Major Difficulty: No Eucharist; Should the Availability of the Eucharist be our First Priority? Should we be Promoting Communion Services? Do Christians have a 'Right' to the Eucharist? Should the One Who Presides over the Community also Preside over the Eucharist? (125–135). These are key research questions for the Aspendale study. Dunn concludes that a priest is "marked by an indelible character at the time of his ordination ... empowered to act 'in the person of Christ the head' ... pre-eminently 'in the mystery of the eucharistic sacrifice'" (1990, 8). Dunn's engagement with the data and the dilemmas he is addressing asserts a position rather than invites a dialogue.

[36] Dallen follows his historical survey with a tight focus on emerging critical issues: Ecclesial Communion and Eucharistic Celebration; The Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Communion Service; Liturgical Leadership and Ordination; The Implications for Catholic Spirituality.

> pressure is beginning to be felt, there is time to develop a measured plan ... . A feature of the 'Project Plan' will be steady development, analysis, reflection, consultation, and revision ... Throughout all these elements of task, there will be revision, reshaping, editing, initiative (1994, 35).[37]

Until this time, Australia had been somewhat insulated from the severe effects of the shortage if not from the debate. There was lively discussion on priestly identity, strategy and the practical implications of the theological discourse that undergirded the issue. The context for the Aspendale project was one of sharply focused practical and theological questions.[38]

4.1.4 Canonical themes and the shape of the Aspendale Project

As the project began, the worldwide, concurrent and growing shortage of priests was reflected in the application of canons 517 and 517.2. These guidelines were used to provide safeguards as new patterns lay ministry developed. In her commentary on the canonical implications of this lay response to a partnership where the numbers on one side were diminishing, Sharon Euart summarised the flexibility of the contemporary

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[37] The Preamble opens with a comment on the practical reality that had so concerned Dallen. "Given the declining number of priests, the opportunities offered to people for worship and priestly service are diminishing. How can we ensure that at least the current level of opportunity is maintained" (1994, 35)? Kimmerling (1986), and Paul (1989; 1995), negatively critique consultative processes that are not representative of the lay voice at the point of analysis or implementation. Laity were equally represented in the *Tomorrow's Church* process but not in the *Priests Deployment Committee* (1998, 22). The comment is made that it is "not the responsibility of the PDC to develop an archdiocesan plan" but it is hard to imagine that the appointment and development of lay ministries in partnership with priests (or vice versa) cannot benefit from wider representation. Surely priests would be expected to be a part of significant decisions regarding strategic policy and deployment of lay ecclesial ministers - and vice versa?

[38] John Thornhill's discussion of "The Role of the Ordained Minister within the Catholic Community" clearly endorses the principles of collaborative ministry (1990). Mark Coleridge, in a Jubilarian address to Melbourne Priests prefaced his list of the stressors and losses for priests in the post-conciliar years with the comment that "[i]n these years, much of what made the priesthood so appealing and satisfying a life has been undermined or is in the process of vanishing" (1995, 3). He names in particular "all that was reserved to the priest alone," and the "sense of standing in the way of lay people" (5). Archbishop Leonard Faulkner of Adelaide described his Diocesan Pastoral Team of ordained and lay, priest and religious as collegially necessary to complement his weaknesses. This team was committed to the development of lay leadership and Small Christian Communities. Faulkner found it hard to imagine how he "would operate as a bishop without the support, challenge, encouragement and accountability provided by members of the Diocesan Pastoral Team - Mrs Madge McGuire, Sr. Pauline Morgan and Fr. Robert Egar" (1993, 4). This illustrates the humanity, vulnerability and balanced representation that corresponds with pre-Aspendale Melbourne but contrasts sharply with the consultative style of post-1996 Melbourne.

scene two years before the restrictions of *On Certain Questions*. She made three points:[39]

> (i) canon 517 provides a canonical response to a pastoral need, namely the shortage of ordained priests; (ii) the positive experience of entrusting a share in the pastoral care of parishes to lay men and women already taking place in several regions of the world was affirmed; and (iii) the role of the priest moderator evolved from that of proper (canonical) pastor who enjoyed the power of a pastor to one endowed with the powers and faculties of pastor who supervises the pastoral care of the parish (1995, 5).[40]

Canon 517.2 added a further dimension.

> If, because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest, will direct the pastoral care (1983).

Guided by this canon and following review and feedback from parishes, the *Tomorrow's Church Report* of March 1994 recommended the acceptance of both the Multi-Parish priest model and the Non-Ordained Pastoral Leader model, the latter subsequently to be trialed at Aspendale. There were three guidelines in the *Discussion Document* (1993, 10) that were consistent with the canons in question.

- The parish was intended to function as an independent unit.
- The Pastoral Leader would reside in the parish and be responsible for all aspects of parish life, except for presiding at the sacraments.
- The Priest Moderator would reside elsewhere and supervise pastoral care but not necessarily be a Visiting Priest.

Earlier in the same year, *Center Papers* no. 8 edited by Karen Smith listed the responsibilities of a Pastoral Administrator from items developed in a survey of nine dioceses. These tasks came under headings such as Worship and Spirituality, Education and Formation, Pastoral Care or Service, Community Building and Leadership Development, Administration, and Relationships with other Communities (1995, 6).

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[39] At this time Sharon Euart was a canon lawyer and associate general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and thus privy to contemporary high-level discussion.

[40] Canon 517 also allows for clustering of parishes under the joint oversight of priests.

These tasks correspond to the Aspendale Pastoral Leader's role and the questionnaire used to evaluate his ministry included the categories noted above.[41]

Apart from presiding over the Eucharist, Smith's job description corresponds to my own (Protestant, Free Church) framework for an ordained minister. It is little wonder that some priests, faced with a composite job specification such as this, would feel some degree of role-insecurity. If a priest's scope of ministry tasks is shrinking and there is no ability to engage the issues and reflect theologically, the default position can be a retreat into the safe and traditional cultic expression of priesthood. This tension appeared in Aspendale but the maturity of the pastoral leader and the congregation complemented the reflective capacity of visiting priests and together they balanced this stage 3-4 tension. The analysis of the data in Chapter 3 indicated that this balance was achieved.

This inevitable dilemma of roles and identity is envisioned in the two canons and is both a place of tension and a place of potential growth as the Aspendale data revealed. Susan Wood focuses the problem for the Church, local and universal, when she states that the

> [o]rdained ministry cannot be understood by itself in isolation or only exclusively in its relationship with Christ. It must find its identity in relationship to the Church, for it exists to serve and build up the Church (2000, xiv).

What happens when a lay minister performs the majority of the tasks of serving and building up and to what degree does the ordained ministry have a need to rediscover its identity? The tendency to shift back to the safe, exclusive and identity-protected cultic role can become one of the factors inhibiting stage 3-4 transition. This complex issue sits alongside Dallen's question regarding the validity of the extensive ministry of lay leaders. Is there nothing priestly or sacramental about their ministries, many of which overlap with those of the ordained? This question emerged many times in the data, no more obviously than in the dialogical comment of a parishioner noted already: "*We fully approve of the PL. I think it shows that married men can be priests. How can the hierarchy ignore what is obviously God's will?*" It was often affirmed that the PL was a "*constant*" presence and the "*leader who makes the liturgy happen no matter who*

[41] See Appendix 1 - Questionnaire. See Appendix 3 – Decree of Establishment and Job Specification.

the priest is." Mass had a "*spiritual quality*" as the PL engendered a "*spirit of belonging to our faith.*" The parish became "*one body*" and "*while not intruding, he has cemented us together.*" The PL's homily included many relevant "*experiences in and around the parish"* and people observed him "*grow in confidence.*" The PL's appointment was also affirmed because it reduced the workload of neighbouring priests but some suggested "*a priest from overseas be appointed to Aspendale,"* to solve the problems of "*morning Mass not being available.*" There was sadness because children could not "*develop a comfortable relationship with different priests that pop in and out and only on Sundays at that,*" and because no priest was available (as first choice) for pastoral concerns. The positive response to the PL's pastoral ability tempered grief over the loss of a resident priest however some could still not see beyond this.

After Vatican II many described similar changes for the ordained priest as an identity shift "from one who acted exclusively *in persona Christi* to one who acts *in persona ecclesiae.*" This significant shift marks the movement "from cultic priesthood to an emphasis on the ministry of priests within the context of the Church" (Driscoll 2005, 14). In its most extreme form, the former sacral model emphasises the sacramental or ritual role of the priest at the expense of pastoral ministry to the parish community. William Cosgrove states that this model

> fosters the idea of the sacristy or sanctuary priest, the ritualiser rather than the leader of the local Christian community. It exalts the priest to a very high level and, by attributing to him significant sacred powers, runs the risk of the priest being seen, at least at the popular level, as a 'man of magic' (1997, 361).

It would be wrong to assume this was a widespread problem and lay the blame for this at the feet of identity-threatened priests. There were some hints of this theme in the data analysis noted on the previous page but there seemed to be little need to protect priests or rein in lay leaders. The canons were implemented with understanding and grace. Indeed, in the same year as *On Certain Questions* Victor Klimoski argued that the concept of priests suffering an identity crisis was a myth (1997, 50-51). He based his position on three national studies ranging from 1970-1993, the Hemrick-Hoge study (1991), multiple state-level studies and his own research. He noted that priests had a sense of being set apart for proclamation and worship (eighty-six percent) and that over two thirds had a strong sense of themselves as essentially different from the laity by

virtue of ordination (Hemrick and Hoge 1991). It has been noted on many occasions that this mirrors the outcomes at Aspendale. Klimoski argued for dialogue between reflective practice and research interpretation.

> Those who would use the myth to justify renewed clericalism or to isolate seminarians in formation lest they fail to develop a priestly identity overlook the fact that the role of the ordained in theory and in practice has enjoyed significant stability ... Exhortations to cling to the theory without a concomitant examination of the conditions for ministry in the contemporary world may well foster a crisis, but it will be one of morale and not identity (1997, 51).

To blame priests for an assumed retreat into clericalism would simply mask another potential problem. Australian laywoman, Teresa Pirola criticises the "lay elitism" that emerges as the other face of clericalism. She defines this phenomenon as "an attitude of superiority that subtly patronises 'ordinary' believers and monopolises the sphere of mission that is rightfully theirs" (1995, 72). It can also erode the confidence and identity of priests. Pirola concludes that the evolution of attitudes and practices takes time.

> The Gospel journey requires a precarious balance: patience with our human frailties and impatience for the realisation of our ideals. We have made enormous leaps and bounds towards a participatory Church. And yet a previous hierarchical mentality still has a grip on Church life, even where lay involvement seems most active such as in the emergence of non-ordained diocesan workers (85).

Pirola effectively describes the Aspendale context as she pinpoints the fine, human line of effective ministry that "requires a precarious balance." Reflective practice, feedback, dialogue and on-going formation can inform our discernment and understanding of this line and the experience of the lay leader and visiting priests at Aspendale certainly indicated a healthy collaboration. Lobinger recounts one small story of new parents who refused a baptism by a newly ordained deacon who was one of their own community.

> 'What, our child is to be baptised by a shoemaker?' The community had gone through a long process of re-thinking and had accepted the deacons, but one couple had not participated in this process. In our present structure the highly trained priest belongs to a different class of people. He lives in a way quite different from the others. Therefore his ministry is often interpreted in terms of class and prestige. A different vision of Church is at stake (1980, 54–55).[42]

[42] In support of his observation, Lobinger cites Douglas Webster's early research on Protestant tent-maker ministries (1964). Congregations were eager to have a "full-time minister because of the prestige associated with having a 'real' minister" (1980, 54, f/n 8).

This story illustrates the degree to which the Aspendale community (and the Melbourne Archdiocese) had developed "a different vision of Church". Because thinking and doing, belief and practice are always and inevitably woven together, Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass argue that Christian leaders need to practice and model wise engagement with culture, tradition and the experience of the local congregation. In this way all the normal patterns of ministry, the words, gestures, expressions of power and daily relationships discover their "fullest integrity, coherence, and fittingness insofar as it embodies a grateful response to God's presence and promises" (2002, 21). While some cultural input is positive, other messages can be destructive and damaging to community and identity and so Dykstra and Bass's approach to practical theology includes reflection on this precarious balance and the cultural and psychological threats. This precarious balance was threatened when there was a change of Archbishop and policy.

The Aspendale data indicated that such threats and shifts in policy can be negotiated if all parties have sound abilities in theological reflection which in turn contribute to a positive bridging of 3–4 transition. Cahalan notes Dykstra's emphasis on the importance of early formation being linked to theological education that enables students to see "what practices mean and the reasons and values that are assumed within them" (2005, 79). For lay and ordained students of theology and ministry, the seminary or pastoral institute must lay the foundation for feedback groups from local parishes (Dykstra 1991).[43] If, as Klimoski claims, the priest is "challenged to be a reflective leader and to help the community articulate in theological categories its experience of God's movement among them" (1997, 51), then that priest or lay leader has to learn how to do this very early in the formation process. Dykstra argues that this must become a tool for ministry as, following ordination, they "take increasing personal responsibility for initiating, pursuing and sustaining these practices, and for including and guiding others in them" (1991). This emerged as one of the strengths of the key leaders at Aspendale. Donna Bradesca offers two comprehensive internship assessment tools that include feedback and critique from a Laity Formation Board (1997, 61–101). This

[43] Fran James focused on 5 and 10 year cohorts of graduates from four Melbourne Theological Colleges and evaluated the pastoral formation curriculum current during their training. One of the major findings was that these ministers valued the skill of theological reflection they had been taught (or bemoaned its absence) and linked this skill to effectiveness and survivability in ministry (2004).

formational component trained lay people to give feedback and also trained seminarians how to receive and act upon feedback.[44] The questionnaire used by Aspendale parishioners to evaluate the pastoral leader conformed to Bradesca's egalitarian and collaborative model. Results indicated high levels of reflective capacity in parishioners and supported the hypothesis that seminary training should include lay feedback as indicated in Chapter Six[45].

What were the fine lines between priest and lay leader that Aspendale parishioners were expected to discern and evaluate given that there were a variety of borderline tasks associated with the Aspendale leader's role? In the wider Church Euart noted the diversity of titles that emerged alongside the proliferation of tasks. The deacon, layperson or group of persons referred to in canon 517.2 may well have been called a "pastoral or parish coordinator, parochial minister, pastoral administrator, lay pastoral leader (as at Aspendale), parish director, resident pastoral minister, etc." (6). The "etc." indicates something of the blend of confusion, expansion and creative freedom of practical interpretations of the canon. The contract and job specification stated that the Aspendale leader was entrusted with the day to day responsibility for the operation of the parish and the pastoral, spiritual and organisational leadership under the supervision of the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor. This was consistent with Dixon's Australian study that summarised lay developments over a rather brief period of time.

> Lay people now act not only as pastoral associates, but also as liturgy coordinators, cathechumenate coordinators, youth ministers, family ministry coordinators, funeral ministers, pastoral care coordinators, adult faith educators and numerous other roles. Several of these roles have been in existence barely ten years (1995, 9).

A survey of Australian journals and periodicals during this period provides examples of contrasting experiences and reflections on aspects of the apparent tension between lay leaders and priests. For example, in conjunction with the blossoming of lay

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[44] See Appendices A and B in Bradesca's article for samples of these questionnaires. They indicate in clear and practical ways the capacity for mutuality, respect and honesty in the feedback process. She argued that this should be a required part of all formation processes for priests.

[45] Section 6.1.2. "Supervised theological field education for priests, seminarians and lay leaders, in addition to work with formators, should incorporate feedback from parishioners – or those who directly receive the ministry. This will enhance collaborative ministry and enable a more effective stage 3–4 transition. There are many instruments available that can be tested for effectiveness and relevance."

ministries, we have noted (page 163, f/n 26) Coleridge's realistic but hopeful Jubilarian address that alluded to the parallel, negative experience of many priests. He suggested that the disappearance of the special reserve of the priest, blurred lines of authority and unstable modes of pastoral care contributed to a situation where " ... much of what made the priesthood so appealing and satisfying a life has been undermined or is in the process of vanishing ... a strong sense of purpose and identity has dwindled" (1995, 3). How correct is this interpretation? He does not blame an expanding laity but he does believe that "bishops and the laity did better from the Council than did priests" (3). Klimoski's qualitative and quantitative data adds more light and shade to Coleridge's interpretation and discourages the drawing of a negative correlation between flourishing lay ministry and priestly identity (1997, 45–56). Driscoll's research in Ballarat covering this period (1995–2005) also suggests that morale problems due to difficult communication with the hierarchy were more likely to negatively affect the purpose and identity of priests (2005, 116). Putney's study of deacons in Australia observed that "if there is a tension between priests and laity, then the introduction of the diaconate will no doubt make it worse" (1993, 97–98). This could well be the case for priests and lay leaders if there is no process of negotiating a stage 3–4 transition such as Lobinger recommends. He suggested a season of community education and reflection and a "changing consciousness of the community and not a pre-determined syllabus" (1980, 55). The management of change assumes a process of re-education that takes into account the reality of grief. Coleridge is honest in declaring that "grief is at the heart of priestly life now" because many priests have left, new vocations are drying up and "the Roman Catholic priesthood as we have known it is disappearing before our eyes" (1995, 4). This is also true for parishioners and unless there is some way of dealing with grief the stage 3–4 transition may be undermined.

Arbuckle's principle of "letting go for re-founding" assumes significant levels of grief in organisational change and echoes some of the Aspendale findings. A common theme noted already was complementarity. Given that the PL "*never set himself as the equivalent of a priest*" he was able to welcome each priest as "*The minister who will lead us in liturgy.*" Parishioners enjoyed an ambience of security based on a "*day to day*" relationship with the PL as a "*constant focus.*" He became "*a comforting presence who establishe[d] a spirit of belonging to our faith.*" The personality of the PL was

"*conducive*" to effective liturgy and he "*participated well with the many priests.*" Others commented that the "*sense of loss in not having a priest [was] less strong, and we still have good priests as effective models.*" Appreciation for adjustment to new roles is often tempered with a sense of loss.

> Change and loss may be intellectually accepted, but at the feeling level, where culture primarily resides, assent to change is far slower and more problematic. In addition to turmoil in HealthCare itself, Christians in HealthCare services are confronted with stress in their own ministries, for this reason they require a particular spirituality to help them (2000, 306).[46]

Readiness for change and acceptance of the implications has many different seasons, many deaths and resurrections and a different time-scale for each person. Transition to stage four requires an ability to deal with death with the hope that "blessed are they who mourn: they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:5). If there is collusion in a denial or suppression of grief then depression and silent protest are likely at all levels of the community (Arbuckle 2000, 308), and the transition process may be disrupted. Arbuckle suggests a three stage ritual process similar to that of van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) where people move from reluctance (due to emotional response to loss) to re-entry (integration of memories while shaping the future) via liminality. This liminal stage is characterised by:

- the pull of the past versus future;
- temptations such as repression, denial, regression, or projection;
- a return to, or fantasising about, mythological roots (314).

Many Aspendale parishioners expressed their grief in questionnaires and interviews and this in turn enabled them to articulate and celebrate new growth. One respondent captures a common theme. "*We might never have known how effective a lay leader could be without this so-called crisis. We do not love our priests less here at Aspendale, in fact I think we appreciate them more.*" Another parishioner holds the tension:

> *I feel the PL has been the best thing to happen to this parish. We have gained so much and lost very little through not having a priest ... we have been let down by the diocese in not having our own regular sacramental priests (as the model was*

[46] Arbuckle's theological model uses Psalms, the passion narratives, and Gospel resurrection stories to enable individuals and communities to grieve (2000, 319–330).

meant to). We have had a wonderful and varied group of priests but I think it would be better to have 1-3 regulars who would get to know us as a parish.

A simple example of the failure to deal with loss in the realm of priesthood and the Church is the absence of any public ritual or grieving process for those who leave the priesthood. There is a deafening silence in contrast to the noisy celebrations and ceremony of ordination. A sense of shame, failure and cover-up is felt by many but there is no way to process it. "When a priest leaves, the whole process is redolent of death. And a sense of bereavement swathes it like a shroud" (Rice 1990, 48). Prior to leaving there is often a silent space of anticipatory grief where thoughts of leaving are seen as treason, fear of disclosure is a daily experience and trust in others diminishes. "So the idea of leaving the ministry is conceived in loneliness and born in isolation" (49), and compounded by corporate silence and the absence of ritual process. "Denial is one of the classic ways of dealing with unacceptable reality. It is however a primitive, immature and dysfunctional way of doing so" (179). Another example that is based on role and identity within the Church is the apparent reluctance to develop and enact liturgical rites of passage for lay leaders. Unlike the Aspendale commencement, notwithstanding the pioneering nature of the project, many lay leaders commence and conclude ministries in silence, with perhaps a few words of welcome or affirmation. A lay ecclesial leader may minister in similar ways to a priest or a deacon but there is often no equivalent ritual. Wood's discussion of sacramental orders and the diaconate could be extended to develop a form of Commissioning (as occurred in Aspendale) for lay leaders. If there is anything unashamedly sacramental and priestly about the ministry of lay leaders then Wood's statement on the ordination of deacons opens up the debate.

> ... sacramental grace is not invisible. Sacramental grace, by the very fact of being sacramental has a *visible* dimension because sacraments are signs and involve materiality. In other words, ordination to the diaconate creates a visible bond between the diaconal service and the Church. It identifies that service as a service of the Church and not merely the service of an individual Christian (2000, 182).

Secure transition to stage four would seem to require consistent patterns of ritual (such as the Commissioning at Aspendale) to mark the beginning and end of lay ministries. The liminality of the experience of corporate transition will perhaps be signalled by the other liminality of rituals that express the new roles of lay leaders and do not threaten or

diminish the rituals designed for priests. Anxiety concerning *professionalisation* or *clericalisation* (Dixon 1995, 9) is in the domain of education not in the avoidance of the opportunity to identify service as a service of the Church and not merely the service of an individual Christian. An appropriate ritual such as the Aspendale Commissioning Service can provide an educative and creative bridge for collaborative ministry. Similarly, a structural or systemic example relates to the implementation of canon 517.2 and Euart's commentary challenges the allocation of resources for the training and formation of future lay leaders.

> If laypersons have the responsibility to obtain the necessary preparation for ministry, they cannot do so if the institutions providing the training are closed to them. Policies for admission to presently existing formation programs may have to be changed if alternative training possibilities for ministry, such as lay formation programs, are not provided in dioceses (1995, 9).

Finally, in the midst of this process of change, Dixon had already foreshadowed the Aspendale appointment by specifically linking the canon with the title used for the new model and with the context of ministry.

> In the *Pastoral Leader Model*, a non-ordained pastoral leader is appointed by the Archbishop, in accordance with canon 517.2, to a parish which will not have a resident parish priest. The pastoral leader resides in the parish and, under the supervision of a priest - pastoral supervisor, provides pastoral, spiritual and organisational leadership for the parish ... Aspendale has volunteered to trial this model, and the position has recently been advertised (1995, 13).[47]

The Aspendale research therefore operated within a juxtaposition of roles and responsibilities that reflected international developments and exhibited a deep mutuality in service and a complex set of perceptions of authority and accountability. The lay leader and visiting priests enacted the key themes of ministry and identity that were appearing on a much wider stage. Dilemmas created by patterns of change and loss were appearing that had both complex origins and as yet unknown solutions. Commencing with an analysis of a Catholic media report on the appointment of the Aspendale leader, the following section discusses the underlying dilemma of identity and role for priests and lay leaders that has been indicated above.

[47] This paragraph is consistent with the advertisement that appeared in *Kairos*, the Melbourne Archdiocesan Journal, and in the secular media.

4.1.5 Conflicting needs and identity - lay and ordained

Case study methodology acted as a focusing lens when evaluating this issue in the research context. *Kairos* reported regularly to Melbourne parishes and announced the job specification for the new pastoral leader.[48] Almost eighty percent of one page was devoted to a graph displaying statistics of decline in available priests and featuring their increasing age profile. An article described strategic planning that "had been developed around the concern of the declining number of priests". One highlighted 'box' stated the warning from the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning (CROPP) that

> if current trends continue, Melbourne will have more than 80 parishes without resident priests by the year 2010. This represents about a third of all parishes (15).[49]

The Pastoral Leadership Board (PLB) was responsible for the project and the *Kairos* journalist noted in one small paragraph that their report

> was produced in a context of increasing commitment, skill and education of lay people for ministry, a role which the Church traditionally recognises in them through baptism.

The dominant focus, immediate impact and perceived theme of the article for general Catholic readers was an emphasis on the shortage of priests and not the shared baptismal imperative that is linked by *Lumen Gentium* to the threefold mission of Christ to teach, to sanctify and to govern (no. 31). This emphasis does not support healthy perceptions of the role and identity of priests and lay persons and, in fact, does not reflect the spirit of those involved in the pilot project. The imbalance was certainly not within the PLB, but the failure to monitor the emphasis in the reporting may signal an ignorance of the distance between those who research and plan, and those working at other levels who become a part of the plans. Even in an Archdiocese that was so positive about stage 3-4

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[48] In 1995, a special edition of October 22–29 (6, no. 21) presented Aspendale as a major news item (15-17).

[49] CROPP also indicated that in 1977 there were 426 priests on appointment. This would drop to 160 by the year 2010. In 1995 there were 200 priests (out of 360 on appointment) below the age of sixty. In 2010 it was predicted that there would be 70 (out of 160) under the age of sixty.

transition, this careless item appeared to diminish the value of lay ministry in its own right. It placed the emphasis on the fact that lay leaders were replacing priests and there is the more subtle danger of clericalism if the focus is placed upon the shortage of priests. In *Pastores Dabo Vobis* John Paul II writes that "the ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God" (n. 16). For this to work at a human and practical level, a mutual goal must be expressed between lay and ordained that has an underlying spiritual value of reconciliation. It is not merely a pragmatic question as to which group complements the other. The Church needs the service of the ordained to actualise its essential reality,

> but the 'primary position' in the Church must belong, not to any one group within the Church, but to the Church as a whole ... . Together, through their identification with, and union with Christ, they offer their whole lives as a priestly 'spiritual sacrifice' which expresses, realises and celebrates the reconciliation between God and humanity brought about by Christ (Costelloe 1998, 331–332).

Costelloe's point could well be undermined by simple statements such as the media article. Bishop Peter Cullinane of New Zealand argued that in a climate where changes in the roles of ordained and non-ordained were sweeping and apparently irreversible, then "crises affecting priestly identity merit all the pastoral sensitivity we can muster" but any approach "also requires us to abandon clericalism" or any miscommunication that could encourage it (1997, 190). He argued that the

> net effect of clericalism is a diffuse impression among people that belonging to the Church, being Church, or being significant in the Church are related to certain roles and groups within the church, more than to baptism (191).[50]

It can also lead to another trap that is related to the misconception that without a priest the community cannot be the Body of Christ, because a faith community without the Eucharist is less able to be conceived of as such. Clericalism Has a variety of guises. A more urgent clericalism that has become a part of the clergy shortage and SWAP

> is apparent in colloquialisms such as 'priestless communities,' 'priestless Sundays' and 'priestless Masses' ... Such clericalism - the ideology of a

[50] Cullinane was addressing a gathering of Bishops and Majors Superior of New Zealand who were addressing themes associated with collaborative ministry.

> privileged caste - is not, as it might seem, a matter of putting too high a value on the priest. It is, rather, an inadequate appreciation of the role that the sacrament of orders plays in the life and worship of the Church (Dallen 1994, 107–108).

In Melbourne the phrase 'priestless Sundays' was commonly used and the media article followed this theme. Lay elitism can also have a similar persona as the Church zig-zags from "employ or perish" to crash courses in theology, from lay appointments that recreate a passive and consumerist laity, to a new 'them and us' mentality where lay leaders are placed on a level above other parishioners. True leadership respects the formation that has already taken place in marriage and home, workplace and parish, and in the many movements, groups and associations that make up the mission of the Church. Pirola mirroring Dallen, throws into relief the need for mutuality and complementarity, and continual vocational affirmation at all levels for lay people.

> When diocesan training courses run parallel to people's lives, without seriously connecting with the skills and leadership that already exist, the results are superficial. Enthusiasm and interest may be generated (as one would get excited about an interesting hobby), but it is essentially laity keeping other laity in their place (1995, 74).

The data will be seen to indicate that the collaborative skills of the Aspendale leader, the parish's maturity and the priests' secure identity empowered and affirmed the formation of all three. There was a simple process enacted through the Parish Assembly where the Pastoral Leader looked for ideas

> *coming out of the community, or community is identifying with them. My tendency is to float with maybe one or two individuals lots of issues ... [and] a small team of four or five people with whom I consult regularly about what is happening in the parish ... I would first float with them and ... if it is ... a broad policy issue for a whole year, present it to the whole assembly.*

However, given the inevitable influence of a resident, full-time lay leader, Komonchak had warned over a decade earlier: " ... it is difficult to overestimate the potential significance of the change in the self-perception of the Church and of its ministries which will result" (1980, 45–46). As the physical and symbolic presence of the ordained liturgical leader diminishes, the physical and symbolic presence of the lay liturgical minister inevitably increases and this brings problems of its own. These problems need not be terminal. Sydney priest John Hill frames the impact of the decline in priestly

vocations in a positive yet paradoxical way. There is the obvious opportunity for greater lay involvement but he sees that this greater involvement, properly managed,

> ... will itself contribute to a flourishing of priestly vocations. It thus involves taking a stand against those who argue that the greater involvement of the laity will accelerate the decline in priestly vocations (1997, 165).

Hill's argument has three parts:

- The chief cause of declining vocations is the multi-sourced crisis of priestly identity.
- Ambiguity (and consequent identity confusion) in the teaching of Vatican II on priesthood is a factor. This persuasive argument finds an echo in Costelloe's analysis of ambiguity within the teaching of John Paul II (1998; 2005). In spite of the "frequent" and "eloquent" pronouncements on the role of the laity, and recognising that the Church cannot "actualise" her own reality without the ordained,

  > this insistence on the primacy of the ordained ministries is hard to reconcile with the vision of the Church which would see the ordained ministry at the *service* of the 'royal priesthood of the faithful' which is the Church's fundamental sharing in the priesthood of Christ (Costelloe 1998, 331).

- Thirdly he locates the crisis in the context of similar identity problems at all levels of interaction - for bishops, priests and laity and indeed even for the identity of the Church. It is therefore a systemic issue where the system "operates on a continuum from extreme morphostasis to extreme morphogenesis" and one of the tasks of leadership is to find a balance between such extremes (Olson and DeFrain 1997, 19). Another task is to identify when to change and when to stand firm, and this must be done without simplistically scapegoating one part of the system (the laity) for what is happening to another part (the priests).

We have noted the pastoral leader's feeling of "*being a bit of an embarrassment*" and sometimes feeling that the hierarchy somehow wished that the model would not be successful and would "*fall over.*" When his mail is consistently mis-addressed by the Cathedral to the local priest he says to [the priest], "*This is a bit crook. ... It's probably canonical you know! ... So all of these little things ... [indicate] or pretend I'm not there, or we sort of hope it'll fall over.*"

In response to such possibilities Hill therefore calls for a reappraisal of all roles at a higher level of decision-making. He hypothesises that greater involvement of laity will actually contribute to more priestly vocations. Quoting from the *Final Message* of the Vatican International Symposium on *Presbyterorum Ordinis* he concludes that priests in their formation should "be prepared for teamwork to be carried out together with the lay faithful, keeping well in mind the identity and distinctiveness of respective roles" (179).[51] Patricia Forster and Thomas Sweetser, working with 30 years of data from the American Parish Evaluation project, traced a pattern of identity confusion in parishioners. This was reflected in the experience of some Aspendale parishioners who often used the term 'Father' in response to the roles being performed, or who firmly rejected terms such as 'Associate' in favour of 'Leader'.

> The diocese may call these non-ordained pastoral leaders by many names, such as pastoral administrator, parochial vicar or pastoral minister. The people themselves know them to be their pastor (1993, 52).[52]

This powerful summary of research appeared on the same page as assessments from some dioceses expressing the belief that not all priests are gifted or called to be a pastor and that ordination does not automatically mean that someone can lead a parish. This statement is no doubt accurate but there is a provocative edge that perhaps contributed to the anxiety of priests still struggling with collaborative ministry. This tension emphasises the need for discernment while dealing with fear, anxiety or judgment. This was a difficult and challenging task that some see as a crisis.

The Chinese character for crisis is made up of two symbols. One signifies *risk* or *danger* and the other signifies the *opportunity* to move beyond the immediate dilemma to consider deeper values and meaning. These dual concepts were borrowed and used in developmental, grief and life cycle theory to describe the tension of risk and growth. Crisis may become the catalyst that encourages "the emergence from embeddedness in the interpersonal" and thus frees one "from the subjectivity of constructing one's morality on the basis of arbitrary affections and empathies" (Kegan 1982, 61). The same dynamic is true of organisations and is found within the Church. There is also a spiritual

[51] This text appears in full in *Origins*, 18 July 1996. 25, no. 20: 509.
[52] Dixon's research on Pastoral Associates had a more detailed list of titles (1995, 13).

element of dying and rising (death and resurrection) to all change, and our ability to transition healthily depends on how we frame the experience. The Whiteheads express the sense of disorientation and loss that is felt by both lay and ordained in the midst of these transitions.

> Some important part of myself, of my life, is being taken away from me. Initially I resist with every type of strategy and distraction, but if I am fortunate, I learn to let go. And in the letting go, in the deprivation and absence this allows, I create space for the next stage of my life ... Very often, in this absence - this desert of the crisis - unsuspected strengths appear, unexpected possibilities emerge (1995b, 197).

Arbuckle's concept of "letting go for re-founding" (2000, 305), is important but life after re-founding needs explanation. Euart used the language of canon 517.2 to describe the creative opportunities in the proliferation of ministry options. This creativity remains constructive as long as there is a commitment to theological rigour in the practical description of the roles.

> While these roles may differ from parish to parish depending on the pastoral situation and whether the parish coordinator is a deacon, layperson, or group of persons, there is a need for a degree of specificity in the role description that minimises ambiguity yet maximises creativity (1995, 7).

Some writers even develop the argument around solo or group ordination. Lobinger argued that a single lay leader should not be ordained, only teams.

> [W]e are now realising that there is an alternative to the one-person ordination of *viri probati*. This refers to the ordination of a small team of local leaders for each community and corresponds to 'group of persons' in canon 517.2 (2000, 310).

The principle "has proved itself in practice. Even if there is an excellent candidate in a community, he should not be ordained until there are more" (1980, 55–56). This model respects the role and skills of priest and lay leader and illustrates Hill's caveat that "greater involvement, properly managed" can be positive for all (1997, 164). When new roles develop without this commitment to rigorous reflection, the essence of the crisis may be identified inaccurately. Adelaide layman and Human Resources manager, Philip McMillan argues that, even if the seminaries and convents were overflowing with

vocations, it would still be important to cultivate and sustain a level of mutuality in the full flourishing of ministry roles

> that we have witnessed in the Church since the Second Vatican Council ... [and] a need for a clear understanding of the nature of lay ecclesial ministry as well as for the development of more collaborative skills on the part of the ordained (2001, 21).

Bishop Howard Hubbard also imagines parish mission overflowing with priests and financial resources and then insists that "there would still be the need to engage in parish restructuring based upon a better appreciation of the theology of baptism and collaborative ministry" (1996, 722).

Whatever the reason for the dilemma, this ambiguity of identity and role is a strategic issue as priests and lay ministers adjust to the changing views of ministry. Almost ten years later the spirit of opportunity in crisis is expressed in Paul Philibert's work on the spirituality of the priest (2004). As a co-commentator with Philibert on the contemporary scene, Susan Wood's summarising comment refers to the complex struggles and systemic tensions experienced by priests over the previous two decades.

> This reflection (Philibert's) situates priestly spirituality within a comprehensive theology of the priesthood, healthy human development, a priest's various relationships, and the challenges of contemporary culture ... this spirituality pays attention to the practices which contribute to a robust and sustainable life (Wood, rear cover).

Philibert brings together theologians, sociologists, psychologists and pastors to affirm the ideal of the priest conforming to Christ in his paschal mystery. This ideal is affirmed, not by appealing to a model from the past, but by paying attention to "the ways in which ordained ministry has evolved, particularly in terms of what we call a 'comprehensive' as opposed to a purely 'cultic' understanding of priesthood" (2004, 4). He focused on the need for priests to exercise practical, discerning, collaborative ministry balanced with a sense of one's identity as a priest. Priests are therefore called to

> promote cooperation among their people, to call forth their gifts, to welcome their imagination and creativity, and to generate among them an expectation for rich collaboration (39).

The spirit of mutuality between priests, lay leader and parishioners was a highlight at Aspendale and signified that lay leaders also generate such an expectation amongst priest. Indeed, *Lumen Gentium* suggests the unique role of priests must be blended carefully with their interdependence and indissoluble link with the laity.

> The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, though they differ in essence and not simply in degree, are nevertheless interrelated: each in its own particular way shares in the one priesthood of Christ (n. 10).

This text can be used to argue for the primacy of ordination over the giftedness of lay persons or that the autonomous and distinct nature of the common priesthood of the faithful is independent of the big jug/little jug role of the ordained. Richard Lennan makes the point that a "dispassionate reading of the text will surely make clear that it is free from polemical intent" and supports both lay and ordained equally (2001, 398). Neal Quartier's description of the reality of parish life for priests focuses on insights necessary for survival. He spells out the double task of discernment and mutual recognition of gifts. "Priests themselves need to recognise and accept these differences. Others can assist them by encouraging their talents while also accepting their limitations" (1999, 80).[53] Sofield and Juliano's stages of ambivalence and lack of definition were still in evidence as Aspendale commenced and much of this was due to the complex link between the identity of the priest and lay leaders.[54]

Given this wider context of paradox, uncertainly and role confusion, what was the climate in early 1995 when over half of Melbourne parishes employed one or more pastoral associates? Roles were poorly defined and very diverse, some were given significant leadership power and others had very little. Uncertainty regarding the professionalisation of the role and the concomitant anxiety about clericalisation led to "an unwelcome barrier between the lay minister and the people, and an undermining of

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[53] Philibert offers what Lennan had been seeking, "a positive and attractive theology of priesthood and its place in the life of the Church." For Lennan, "the best contemporary theological writing is also positive about ordained ministry, [and] affirms its uniqueness without usurping or ignoring the necessary gifts of all of the baptised" (2001, 399–400).

[54] Lennan edited an earlier text from the Catholic Institute of Sydney in which he agrees with Congar and contributor Marie Farrell that "the laity do not need to be clericalised before they can be said to be participating fully in the mission of the Church" (1995, 12). Each contributor refers to broad areas of slippage, whether in the area of pastoral leadership, involvement in the liturgy or participation in dialogue.

the identity and role of the priest" (Dixon 1995, 9). Practical problems such as salary, tenure and family pressures indicated difficulties in structural and strategic integration and the issue of identity remained. Brundell recognised that *On Certain Questions* sought to address the fact that when the non-ordained faithful collaborate in the sacred ministry of the priest they participate in the exercise of the priestly office and act in the arena of the ordained minister. However he warned against the possibility of confusion and affirmed the purpose of the Instruction if not the method of delivery.

> [T]hey do not have the pastoral office conferred on them - we do not clericalise the lay person ... and all necessary care must be taken to ensure that the sacramental effectiveness of the ordained minister is not obscured, and that the lay participant in pastoral ministry is not clericalised (1998, 28).

Costelloe also seeks a complementarity of roles and areas of ministry (1998; 2005).

> Another vital topic that needs a creative response is the relationship of non-ordained ministers to ordained priests ... if non-ordained members of the Church are involved in pastoral, sacramental, liturgical leadership of a community, can this be understood as an expression of their authentically *lay* vocation, and as their way of working *in the world*, rather than as simply collaborating in what properly belongs to the ordained, as usurping the role of the ordained, or as taking the non-ordained away from their authentically secular orientation (2001, 405)?

He argues that every Christian is a member of the laity. There "exists within this one people a group who has special ministerial responsibility," and for the Church in mission, "the community of Christ's disciples exists in order to be a sacrament *in* the world and *for* the world" (1998, 327). He cites Jan Groot (1968, 27–34) who sees the Church as a sacrament of the world where the secularity of the world is taken up into the reality of God's kingdom, while the sacrality of the cult is transformed into the reality of daily life (328). Groot dissolves the boundary between the cult and the world, recognising that although cult has remained religious, "its realisation that God's dominion is all-embracing has broadened its perspective ... the reality of the sacrifice does not lie in the confines of a Church building but in life in the world" (1968, 33).

Liturgically, Jürgen Moltmann envisions worship as a messianic feast that renews remembrance of Christ and sparks within all participants renewed hope for the kingdom.

> In this way it sets everyday life in the great arc spanning this remembrance and hope ...The messianic feast sets the assembled community, with its daily pains and joys, in the broad context of the trinitarian history of God with the world. The messianic feast is not an ecstasy that transports us into another world; it is the experience of the qualitative alteration of this world (1977, 261–262).[55]

The theological warp and weft of role-identity (lay/ordained) and field of ministry (world/cult) has practical, relational and systemic implications for lay and ordained. The discussion borrows insights from systems theory. Family systems theory in particular catches the essence of community rather than organisation and the following section develops this analytical theme.[56] The section that follows builds on the integration of the Aspendale themes with the wider picture of the development of lay ministry.

4.2 Engaging the Themes

The monkey-rope is Herman Melville's symbol in *Moby Dick* for the "relationships that bind each of us to every other individual who shares our human condition - family, friends, lovers, colleagues at work, and all those who make up the society and world around us" (Lewis 1996, 172).[57] This metaphor is used to explore the relationship between priests and lay leaders.

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[55] See also Moltmann's subsequent discussion of the relational, pastoral and missional themes within the messianic feast. He considers how Christian worship might become a "feast of freedom" for all participants (1978, 64–81).

[56] Family systems theory grew out of the general systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968). Murray Bowen developed a broader, family-based approach where emotional and relational patterns formed "the dance of life" (1978, 353). This choreography makes it difficult to differentiate self and discover one's identity. "Differentiation means the capacity ... to define [one's] own life goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures" (Friedman 1985, 27). Sofield and Juliano describe readiness for collaborative ministry as an integrative process where developmental theory (Erikson 1963) and a systems perspective combine to enable the practitioner to individuate through discernment of their own giftedness and that of others (1987, 47–81). Kegan describes a developmental task that theological reflection should take into account. Human interaction sculpts "the progressively individuated self and the bigger life field" (1982, 43). The Whiteheads' model of theological reflection, based on the faith tradition, personal and communal experience and contemporary culture, readily includes all of these factors (1995).

[57] Jerry Lewis spent over 40 years in family studies as a Research Psychiatrist. *The Monkey Rope* reviews almost half a century of research on the clinical themes that appear in some form in all human relationships.

4.2.1 The "monkey-rope." Systems and symbiosis

The monkey-rope links Queequeg, (the harpooner who stands precariously on the back of a dead whale), to Ishmael the bowsman high on the deck above. If Queequeg falls off to drown or is crushed between the carcass and ship, Ishmael will be pulled by the monkey-rope to his death. The rope between them can either kill or save them both.[58] Ishmael reflects on this indissoluble link.

> So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two; that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death ... And yet still further pondering - while I jerked him now and then from between the whale and the ship, which would threaten to jam him - still further pondering I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal (1981, 298).

During an average week at Aspendale, the Parish Leader was a constant presence. With many different visiting priests, his presence and pastoral influence offered not only a sense of continuity and security but also a growing thread of tension. In the midst of fluid and developing patterns of ministry the search of the priest for his unfolding identity as an ordained servant of Jesus Christ is no less profound or potentially imperilled than that of the lay leader who is searching for his or her identity. Cozzens claimed that for priests, behind each new challenge "lies the lingering question of his true self as one ordained into the priesthood" (2000, 9). The question of identity also lies behind each new challenge for any lay minister appointed to a role that approximates that of a priest. Melville offers a type of parable where the actions of each are as important as critical theological reflection ("And yet still further pondering ... still further pondering") upon them. Whitehead and Whitehead link vocation and identity developmentally for both ordained and non-ordained ministry.

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[58] Human interaction in the sanctuary illustrates the point. Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham, UK, addressed the clergy of the Archdiocese of Sydney. "Of course liturgy is 'the work of the people' and God uses all who play their part, their words, their music, their experience of life. You too cringe when someone moves to take centre-stage in the celebration of the Mass. It can be clear simply in the way that they walk across the sanctuary. Yet someone probably cringes at things that you and I do, and experiences them as creating an obstacle between them and the presence of God they have come to find" (2001, 391). The task of discerning ones identity and role in the midst of complex, subtle and subjective interactions requires careful articulation of the complementarity of lay and ordained ministers.

> A Christian vocation is a gradual revelation - of me to myself by God. Over a lifetime I gradually learn the shape of my life. And it takes a lifetime ... God reveals us gradually to ourselves ... a vocation is not some external role visited upon us. It is our own religious identity; it is who we are trying to happen (1995b, 22).

The "external role visited upon us" or Vatican teaching on this role is not the end of the story. Rather each person's contribution will assume a tentative, exploratory character that nudges them into the world of theological reflection. The Whiteheads' interplay of reflection and vocation complements Kegan's task of discerning the evolving self in the midst of multiple systemic factors that conspire with the human condition. "Rather than locating the life force in the closed individual or the environmental press, it locates a prior context which continually elaborates the distinction between the individual and the environment in the first place" (Kegan 1982, 42). The locus of control will be within the person. However the focus and vision will not be "an internal equilibrium but" as noted above, "an equilibrium in the world, between the progressively individuated self and the bigger life field, an interaction sculpted by both and constitutive of reality itself" (43).

Theological reflection, while respectful of personal and communal experience, has a wider focus - God, as mediated and understood through a variety of sources. Following Winnicott's theory of trust and play as joint creators of an environment conducive to growth (1965), the Whiteheads see community as "the context of vocational play" (1995b, 31). Kinast reviews a number of models of theological reflection including the Whiteheads' ministerial style. This offers ordained and non-ordained ministers the opportunity to "still further ponder" on their relationship in a way that is respectful of each other's identity and role, the Church tradition that nurtures them and the wider community of the faithful of whom they are a part.

> The Whiteheads' emphasis on both personal and communal experience offsets a cultural tendency towards individualism (and in the realm of ministerial training, towards clericalism). It also directs theological reflection to an important but often neglected authority - the sense of the faithful (2000, 8).[59]

[59] Dixon and Bond found that Melbourne parishioners believed religious pastoral associates (eighty three percent) and lay pastoral associates (seventy one percent) had enriched parish life (2001, 7). In an address to a Pastoral Associates Conference, Bernadette Keating affirmed their history in Victoria but warned of clericalism, one of the litmus tests of a fragile or unformed identity. "How do we avoid clericalism: why should you take on doing things as they were done in the past when there were only ordained ministers? Lay leadership could be different" (2001, 11).

Dallen also focused on the task of engaging all partners in the reflective community. The historical setting for the Aspendale project still demonstrated confusion regarding all of the key players who made up

> the ecclesial character of the community whose actual (if not canonical) leaders and pastors are not ordained. To explore this issue requires considering the significance of ordination for liturgical and pastoral leadership, the situation of pastors who are not ordained, and the relationship of the priest and the church (1994, 109).

Sofield and Kuhn's study of parishioners' perceptions of collaborative leaders echoes both the salvific and potentially destructive themes of the monkey-rope and argues that "change and growth within any organisation are an organic process involving all its parts. All flourish or wither in relationship to each other" (1995, 14). While the effectiveness of lay ecclesial ministry is not fully determined by supportive (or resistant) priests and bishops, their attitude is critically important to successful development. Studies present both complementary and diverse findings on this complex relationship. In 1991 the National Pastoral Life Centre in New York undertook a study of questions that focused on the ability of priests to minister with lay people and the proper preparation of present and future parish ministers who would inevitably be faced with the challenge of collaborative ministry. The follow-up study in 1995 integrated the findings. It was evident that working relationships

> are a matter of virtues, skills, and structures. It will be terribly important that we keep working at enabling priests to be able to work well with lay people, the vast majority of whom will be women. This is an ethical requirement, a ministerial requirement, and, ultimately, a theological requirement (Murnion 1996, 25).

The ability to "work well with lay people" does not necessarily mean pastoral care. It can mean mentoring and supervising those in the parish team who have been trained, set aside for ministry and offer pastoral care in partnership. Supervising priests (as in the *viri probati* model) can enable volunteers to deepen

> their understanding of themselves and their relationship with God ... This is an area that in the past was addressed via seminary formation for priests. However an alternative approach that is more in keeping with new paradigms in volunteering may be to provide a mentoring and coaching framework (McMillan 2001, 20).

An ethical and ministerial requirement comes directly from canon 229.1. Lay people

> have the duty and right to acquire the knowledge of Christian teaching which is appropriate to each one's capacity and condition, so that they may be able to live according to this teaching, to proclaim it and if necessary to defend it, and may be capable of playing their part in the exercise of the apostolate.

The canon assumes that each diocese should provide an encouraging culture during education and later in active ministry. It is expected that resources for on-going formation and access to seminaries will be available. This is a mutual responsibility. Canon 231.1 states that lay people have a duty to acquire "are obliged to acquire the appropriate **formation** (my emphasis) required to fulfil their function properly and to carry out this function conscientiously, eagerly, and diligently". The Aspendale pastoral leader was not supported in this way. There was no formal internship prior to the appointment and the change of policy meant that, to use his words, he was a "bit of an embarrassment" in addition to being part of a stage 3-4 transition. Murnion does not refer specifically to Canon 231.1 but he does ask a question that relates to practical skills and theological formation.

> Of equal importance will be the formation of lay people for ministry ... and therefore access to the institutions that provide this ... Isn't it time for the Church to take a more "proactive" role and forthright policy of recruiting and preparing all those who will be entrusted with the ministry of parishes (1996, 25)?

Winnicot indicates that it is the quality and integrity of the "holding environment" that enables growth and development (1965). Kegan proposes that "we are held throughout our lives in qualitatively different ways as we evolve" (1982, 256). The canon embodies this truth and Murnion challenges those in leadership to support lay ministers in their formation. It is an ethical, theological and developmental value that can be threatened by what Dykstra calls a "stripped-down" approach to basic training in skills rather than formation PLUS skills (1991, 35–41). Dykstra identifies inadequacies in theological education when it is: (i) individualistic - something simply done to others or delivered; (ii) technological - guided by good theory, the minister is technically good in applying this theory in congregations; (iii) ahistorical and abstract - ministers fail to

consider the history of practices or the role practice plays in the contemporary context as they apply the theory they have learnt (1991, 35–41). The process of being held and sustained does not refer to the vulnerability of ministers in search of their identity. Rather it refers to the "evolutionary state of embeddedness" where an individual can transcend culture. For Kegan, this "is analogous to transcending my culture and creating a distinction between what now appears as the culture's definition of me and what is really me" (1982, 257). It is not simply a matter of strategic discussion or consultation. Groome writes of an "emotional environment" that is conducive to shared praxis and describes this as "the ancient Christian virtue of hospitality." It is this that enables people to develop trust and "believe that their contributions will be valued and taken seriously ... It is in the willingness to listen that the hospitality of a shared praxis group is tested" (1980, 226).[60]

The concept of hospitality can be reframed from a developmental perspective. Kegan describes the balance of evolutionary development and the tension of psychological embeddedness for a person as a process involving three functions. The institutional mode of relationship that expresses these three functions can be applied to formation and identity in ministry as people relate to the Church leadership and authority structures:[61]

- Confirmation or "holding on". We acknowledge the capacity for independence and move towards self-definition. Ministry is no longer a job but a vocation, and clericalism diminishes. Authority is seen as open to challenge and perhaps embraced as a partner.
- Contradiction or "letting go". We do not accept a mediated, non-intimate, form-subordinated relationship confused and limited by hierarchical structure. Heavy-handed Instructions or lack of dialogue inhibit identity formation and create unnecessary (as opposed to healthy or necessary) resistance.

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[60] Freire argues that "whereas faith in man (sic) is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue" (1970, 80). Church members may trust their leaders but continuing trust will hinge on whether that faith is reciprocated by dialogue. For New Testament teaching on hospitality see Romans 12: 13 and 1 Peter 4: 9.

[61] Kegan describes the six sequential modes of evolutionary balance and psychological embeddedness as incorporative, impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional, (my emphasis) and inter-individual. For detailed discussion see Chapter Three (73–110).

- Continuity or "staying put for integration". Ideals can be relativised and contextualised. The ensuing tension becomes an arena of learning and consolidation. Leadership must be aware of this and play fair in communication and adult debate and be prepared to listen and dialogue (113–132).

Kegan's final stage (inter-individual) describes how a person is embedded in, or experiences a part in, what he calls "interpenetration of systems." This is the time for acknowledging and culturing a "capacity for interdependence, for self-surrender and intimacy, for interdependent self-definition" (120).

It is critical that leadership takes seriously these issues of adult maturing, vocational discovery and faith development or people will simply opt out of an unjust, manipulative and unwise conversation about identity. The 'opting out' can take the form of a physical departure from Church or a retreat into old forms and patterns of ministry and communication. Again, this is linked to Sofield and Juliano's stage 3-4 transition.

4.2.2 Lay and ordained formation: a summarising comment

The Whiteheads describe a Church where vocational dreams can develop as Christians discover the purpose and possibility of life and ministry and the Church's own emerging role.

> No longer sensing itself the proud possessor of God's unambiguous plan for humankind, the Church guards a fragile and partial vision of God's dream for us. As a Church we have yet to imagine what God has in store for us. If this humbles us as an institution, it can also excite us because we are in the midst of a revelation … the Church's vocation is still being revealed (1992, 89).

The Church's vocation is our vocation and can only be expressed through the vocation of all the faithful whether ordained or not. John Paul II declared in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that "the ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God" (n. 16). Ordained ministers "always remain members of the faithful. They, like all other Christians, share in the common priesthood of the faithful" (Costelloe, 1998, 333). This indissoluble link brings fulfilment and tension, confusion and inspiration. The shadow of the monkey rope appeared very early in the joint formation of both lay and ordained, just as it did in

the existential questions of the Aspendale pastoral leader. Some seminaries expressed anxiety that accepting lay people into classroom discussions on the theology of ministry or ministry formation programs would diminish the unique identity of priests and perhaps lead to further erosion of vocations. Murnion rejects this as another simplistic scapegoat.

> I suggest that the opposite is true. It is lay people with little understanding of sacramental theology who will lack appreciation for the theology of orders and the ministry of the priest (1996, 25).[62]

Klimoski identified seven myths in his study on developing patterns of Catholic ministry. Three indicated a positive response to collaborative ministry instead of the expected negative perception.[63] Klimoski found that priests did not experience the laity as a problem, were reasonably happy with their career, and while there were dilemmas associated with contemporary priesthood, the role has "enjoyed significant stability" (1997, 51). His findings are based on:

- a meta-analysis of three national studies (1970; 1985; 1993);
- the Hemrick-Hoge study of priests ordained 5-9 years (1991);
- a number of large multi-State diocesan studies.

A degree of ambivalence in the findings is predictable and perhaps even desirable in an evolutionary stage 3-4 scenario. As priests continue to separate from embeddedness in old models and roles, and lay persons engage in new models and roles with parallel experiences of enthusiasm and anxiety, it behoves the **institution** to be adult enough not to withdraw from either party what Kegan calls "ideological supports" (120). Ideological supports within the frame of this study would mean a commitment to the theological and practical implications of collaborative ministry where those in leadership do not summarily eliminate experiments (as in Aspendale) or lose their nerve and retreat into protective or defensive behaviours. Klimoski's analysis appeared in the same year as *On Certain Questions*. His data indicates, at least in America, that priests did not need

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[62] When I completed my seminary formation in 1979 almost 100 percent of the students were ordination candidates. I have taught for 15 years in a protestant seminary where only 20 percent of the students are ordination candidates. Our lay students, because of their biblical, theological and ministerial studies and their partnership in Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE), have a clearer and more theologically focused understanding of their own call and the call the ordained. Seminarians from a variety of Catholic Orders study at the Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne and share programs with lay students.

protecting from predatory and corrosive patterns of lay ministry.[64] Klimoski's rejection of the myth that "older priests are dissatisfied with the newest generation of clergy" is subsequently modified by Hoge (2002; 2003) following the 2001 survey. In spite of a decline in the number of priests and a rise in average age there was a rise in morale. However a shift from the servant-leader model of priesthood to the cultic model espoused by younger priests had led to conflicting ideological viewpoints between older and younger priests.

Priest-sociologist Andrew Greely suggests that the level of morale in priests is currently high on a number of scales (2004, 36-72).[65] Murnion would like to ensure that all new priests address major identity factors. He recommended that they must have "a strong sense of the corporate character of priesthood", and balanced relationships with both men and women. Seminary and post-seminary formation should complement a "strong sense of the baptismal charism of the laity", and a confident "formation in doctrinal and liturgical theology" to find a balance between authoritarianism and relativism (2000, 20–21). In this new generation the tension of transition into stage four will have different expressions but solutions will hinge on sound formation, theological education and mutuality combining to support a commitment to collaborative ministry.

As Dixon indicates, it is not so much the idea of collaborative ministry that is the problem. The dilemma lies in the perception of the concept, the birth pains of the implementation and the exercise of new patterns of lay ministries (1995, 9). For this reason, the experience of Aspendale, the surfacing of these tensions and the successful management of paradox and ambiguity needed to be available to the Archdiocese.

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[63]The Hemrick-Hoge study supported this finding. Hoge's (2003) report began to track other more complex changes in attitude but Klimoski's findings are relevant to this late 90s scenario.

[64] Consider again James Gill's 1983 analysis that those in formation should be "apprenticed for a significant period of time to lay, clergy or religious persons who, in their ministry to others are clearly manifesting leadership qualities, styles and skills" (2005, 28). A later editor finds Gill was accurate in his "ability to relate the best findings of social science to issues in the Church and "his ideas on training for leadership still have relevance" (Barry 2005, 3).

[65] In 1989 The United States Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry released *Reflections on the Morale of Priests*. Morale was defined as an internal attitude to hope and confidence. The bishops expressed anxiety about the general level of morale. See Thomas Morgan's discussion of the anatomy of priestly morale for a helpful discussion of this phenomenon (1996, 17–21), and Driscoll (2005) for a contemporary Australian perspective.

4.2.3 *The tension and its 'resolution': A Vatican Response*

The structure surrounding the Aspendale project demonstrated an educative approach based on evaluative and corrective feedback and assumed theological reflection on any outcomes. The data were intended to be a part of the *Tomorrow's Church* process. The role of evaluation and how it will be used by those who commission the research has long been problematic in the behavioural sciences just as feedback has been problematic within the culture of the church. This case study explored how feedback and data from the local scene were used and whether there was a correlation with the dialogical patterns from a much wider context. The anxiety of Aspendale parishioners when the model was deleted and the consequent marginalising of their experiences prompted the question as to whether the Vatican (or local hierarchy) was creating dialogical possibilities as Groome, Kegan or the Whiteheads suggest. Early reading in research methodology for this project included a variety of sobering articles. "Action for what?" asked Suchman (1970). Weiss comments that "institutions often do not change their activities in response to evaluation" and evaluators "complain about many things, but their most common complaint is that their findings are ignored" (1966, 136). Kimmerling acknowledges that consultation is a great step forward from unilateral decision-making but cannot guarantee "that the opinions sought and offered will be either listened to or taken into account in the final decision" (1986, 549). This was the spirit into which the *Tomorrow's Church* process was welcomed and widely engaged in Melbourne and the Aspendale model contained many of the tensions and questions identified throughout this review. It was accepted and implemented in 1996 and the research began. The findings were neither sought nor discussed when the leadership in the Archdiocese changed in 1997. Aspendale was only one small part of the process that was dislocated. Was the response of leaders and parishioners symptomatic of a much deeper sense of disillusionment? The data will reveal a high level of tension within the parish on this theme.

Christifideles Laici states that all Catholics share through their baptism in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and this is made clear before any specific discussion of lay vocation (n. 10-14; 18-20). Post-Aspendale experience in Australia and elsewhere continued to raise questions regarding what we have already

identified as the "sensitivity and complexity of resolving the respective roles of priest and laity" (McMillan, 2001, 17). This was the sentiment of John Hill four years earlier as he called for priestly formation to inspire teamwork that respected the "identity and distinctiveness of respective roles" (1997, 179). Hill offered a later analysis of *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, a 2002 Instruction. He recognised that the context of official documents before and after the Second Vatican Council was the "evolution of the priestly office over the centuries, and the on-going search for an identity for that office" (2005, 141). Hill acknowledged the complexity of the challenges to priestly identity following Vatican II, but he also listed historical and recent abuse scandals, pastoral responses to poor morale, disorientation, stress, poor self-image and loss of purpose. He concluded that the "continuing haemorrhage from the priesthood and the serious decline in priestly vocations" both derive from this multi-faceted crisis of identity but he also reminds us that this issue in turn cannot be separated from the Church's own identity crisis (142). The debate continues into the present, but with no simple, single-focus cause or symptom.[66] Whatever the differing views of researchers and parish planners, the Vatican perceived that there was a climate of increasing ambiguity and complexity. In 1997, in the second year of the Aspendale project, John Paul II, along with eight Vatican offices, promulgated *On Certain Questions*. Cozzens noted that the writers feared that lay ministry

> was encroaching on the ministries specifically identified with the ministerial priesthood. According to the Instruction, the blurring of roles and identities is a factor in the drastic decline of priests and seminarians in many parts of the world and a source of confusion to both the non-ordained and ordained faithful ... the confusion has led to pastoral and liturgical abuses (2000, 9).[67]

The changing role and evolving identity of the priest seems to be at stake. While it is important to clarify role and identity, *On Certain Questions* was seen by some as overly defensive of priestly status and privilege at the expense of the validation of

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[66] Patrick Parkinson cites statistics from Broken Rites, an Australian support group for victims of religious abuse. Sixty-one priests and brothers had been sentenced for sexual offences by mid 1999. In spite of this, he reflects Hill's multi-variate analysis by noting that it would be "foolish to believe however that child sexual abuse ... is a consequence of the Catholic tradition of celibacy, even if this is a contributing factor" (2003, 3). See also Richard Sipe for a similar discussion of the complex factors involved (1995).

[67] Few would dispute that " ... equally clearly the boundaries are at times blurred," and no less so than in the consequent exercising of the pastoral and liturgical tasks that were formerly the sole precinct of the ordained priest (McMillan 2001, 17). The tension of the monkey rope is apparent again.

collaborative ministry and lay empowerment. To use the monkey-rope image, Cozzens is representative of commentators who perceived that those in leadership appreciated the risks for both parties but did not exercise good judgment in the balance of their intervention. The intervention was not seen as impartial and perhaps even strengthened the belief that at the point where the activity was happening, the parish, those involved were not adult enough to keep wrestling with the issues and to maintain respect for the preciousness of each others' gifts and vocations. Priests, pastoral leader and parishioners at Aspendale were able to manage the complexity and the Instruction was received with dismay and anger. It is not surprising that impartiality is difficult when many of those making judgments high up on the captain's deck are priests themselves and formed decades earlier in an era where the processes of theological reflection and praxis as we now know them were not widely known. They can be alien concepts to a number of Church leaders in all traditions.

To continue the metaphor of Herman Melville, on the deck and in the water the tiredness is felt and seen, the anxiety is tangible, the slippery rope that links theory and practice is familiar and, even yet, the compassion of a shared but different priesthood can inspire another day of ministry. Cozzens however claims that the Instruction returned to the framework of "ancillary" or "just helping Father" concepts for lay ministry. This regressive approach was unfortunately seen to be supported and enshrined in a genre of a hierarchical edict that demonstrated an inability to listen or engage in dialogue, or to trust those who can develop praxis from their hands-on struggle with emerging issues.

> While the focus of the Instruction was on the sacred character of the ministry of the priest as distinct from the ministry of the common priesthood of the faithful, the document held that lay ministry, rather than flowing from baptism, is ancillary to the ministry of the ordained priesthood (2000, 8).

In Australia,

> the reaction stemmed from the widespread feeling that we in the local Churches are not being treated in the right way, and from the perception that this Instruction was another of a long series of restrictive edicts from Rome, which is acting more and more like a head office. Whether that feeling and that perception

> are well founded or not, that is the climate of anti-Roman sentiment in which the Instruction landed (Brundell 1998, 28).[68]

The document was not only perceived to be unhelpful and discouraging, Brundell claimed it was "too concentrated on abuses, unwelcoming of and even unappreciative of the laity, and by-passing yet again the role of local bishops and national bishops' conferences" (26).[69] We have noted Klimoski's (1995) combination of meta-analytical and large-scale diocesan research over 25 years. At least one of his seven rejected myths (that priests experienced uncertainty about identity vis à vis the laity) would seem to still be accepted by Vatican thinking. The Instruction, by implication, laid major blame for this identity problem at the feet of those who supported and encouraged greater lay participation in the Church. The response in America and Australia was one of disappointment at the absence of subtlety, research and wide-angled theological reflection.[70] Wide-ranging lay participation is an easy target but many in Australia clearly placed it within an evolving framework and acknowledged that in a developmental stage

> sensitivities are high, and a little encouragement or discouragement has a powerful effect. One needs to be especially careful to find the right approach and the right moment to clarify theological principles and correct deviations without seeming to criticise and discourage the good (Brundell, 1988, 29).

This failure in communication contrasts with an earlier document that successfully expressed support for priests. In 1992, when the morale of priests seemed to be at a depressingly low point, the German Bishops distributed a letter on priestly

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[68] Brundell notes that the document was entrusted to diocesan bishops and other Ordinaries but distribution was widespread. He comments that at the very least, it "should have been clearly labelled - Beware, this document is dangerous in the wrong hands - read at your own risk" (1998, 29).

[69] Similar themes emerge in my study of documents from England and Wales and the United States. Brundell laments "yet another of a long line of restrictive edicts from a distant authority that seems to be as sensitive as a high speed train." He sympathises with the bishops to whom it was entrusted and who "have virtually been required to become enforcers of rules that they had no hand in formulating. They are to be policemen rather than shepherds" (1998, 30).

[70] The Instruction belongs to a previous paradigm where pronouncements without commitment to dialogue were normative. The responses noted here and elsewhere in this report are a plea for dialogue not just because of the nature of Christian community but because the problems are complex and solutions will be evolutionary. Data are ambiguous and identify generational distinctions but a positive morale overall (Hoge 2002; 2003). There are conflicting data from within Australia. See the *Catholic Leader* of the 10 October 2004 for a summary of initial findings from research for the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. This study pinpoints areas of serious decline in morale on a number of fronts.

ministry. They expressed support and concern without polemicising the reality of developing lay ministry. This document sought to

> provide an open and honest analysis of this situation; priests felt they were understood, and they were grateful for the bishops' expression of solidarity. At any rate this document was more effective than yet another purely theoretical, dogmatic-theological clarification of the "image" of priest (Kaspar 2003, 46).[71]

It also reinforced the need for effective communication at all levels of the life of a priest, especially as they deal with the hierarchy of the Church. For example, Driscoll's research on Ballarat priests concludes that while the personal morale of priests is high their corporate morale is suffering "at an institutional or organisational level." They perceived

> a gulf between themselves and the authorities of the Church. This was one of the greatest issues of morale. While the priests' own morale continues to be strong, it is in their belonging and relationship to the presbyterate, to the diocese and the universal Church that their morale is weaker (2005, 104).[72]

The composite job specification for lay ecclesial leaders in *Center Papers* no. 7 (Smith 1995) included tasks previously found in the exclusive domain of priests and seems to have developed from the confusion regarding the identity and role of priests. The corrective, canonical feedback in *Center Papers* no. 8, (Euart 1995), enabled clarity to emerge for both ordained and non-ordained and this brought comfort and support to both. Robert Sternberg and Todd Lubart ask three questions regarding organisations or institutions:

- How much desire is there for creativity?
- How much desire is there for the appearance of creativity?
- What is the self-esteem, or opinion the institution has of itself?

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[71] A compounding dilemma for priests is the perception that bishops are not held accountable. Cozzens names bishops whose errors and criminal actions do not prevent them from exercising public ministry while priests are forced to resign or prevented from celebrating Mass for single incidents. He suggests they are supported by feudal structures and Catholics "see a double standard for bishops: zero tolerance for priests accused of sexual abuse but only fraternal correction for bishops who have reassigned abuser clerics" (2004, 106). As one priest remarked to me: "Where are the Instructions directed towards the lack of collegiality in bishops?"

[72] Fine-tuning of themes and subtleties of ethos can be absent in pronouncements that address single-focus topics. For example, do the challenges and difficulties of celibacy cause job dissatisfaction or does job dissatisfaction lead to questioning of celibacy (Greeley 2004)?

If desire for change is low and desire for the appearance of change is high then this may combine with low self-esteem to create a medium low "surface" support and a low "deep" support for major paradigm shifts (1995, 77). This could well explain the inability to sustain stage 3-4 transition. For new structures to develop from a fluid and evolving situation, it is normal practice to expect research, data and insights to engage new patterns as they emerge. The challenges around Aspendale were no different and needed time to be negotiated. Brundell's observation is pertinent.

> [M]any hurdles have to be negotiated before truly collaborative ministry occurs. New skills are needed; old habits have to die, habits that have come from long training in the wider Catholic community and, in the case of priests, reinforced in our seminary training and early apprenticeship in priestly ministry (2001, 1).

The Hemrick-Hoge study of 1995 did not pick up a widespread or uniformly patterned identity crisis per se, but did foreshadow a shift from servant leadership, which is inextricably linked with collaborative ministry, to a more cultic model as seen in Hoge's recent studies (2002; 2003). Eighty six percent of the sample of those ordained five to nine years affirmed that their self-perception as someone set apart for proclamation and worship was secure. Almost seventy percent indicated that their ordination provided a perception of themselves as essentially different from the laity because of their ordination. By 2001, Hoge had identified this shift towards a renewed emphasis on the cultic model (2003). Since the advent of SWAP, one of the common dangers identified (as experienced at Aspendale) is when liturgical and pastoral leadership

> are not combined in the same person. Instead, the liturgical leader is an ordained outsider, and the pastoral leader, not ordained, is unable to exercise liturgical leadership in the eucharistic assembly (Dallen 1994, 119).

Dallen outlined the cultic model where, although "the ordained priest does sacramentally represent both the Church and Christ, the priest does not do so in the liturgy as a cultic person ... but as a pastoral person, - as one in pastoral leadership" (118). The role of the priest acting in the person of Christ, when interpreted primarily from a cultic understanding of priesthood, has been used as the basis for arguing that the priest must be male and celibate. Many lay pastoral leaders are not male and many, as in the Aspendale case, are married. The complex weave of factors affecting the identity of both

lay and ordained therefore includes eucharistic and cultural issues in addition to the theological issues of ministry and ordination.

4.2.4 Finding a path towards dialogue and theological reflection

To what degree was the confusion outlined above exaggerated or stimulated by *On Certain Questions*? Was the communication style of this document necessary, when the climate and environment of community requires dialogue and consultation? *On Certain Questions* became part of the debate but the contribution seems to have been neither helpful nor constructive. Bishop Oscar Lipscomb's paper to the U.S. National Federation of Priests' Councils affirmed the strategic and missional role of dialogue in the life and ministry of a priest.

> First as priests you play a key role in the dialogue between God and his people. Second, you represent the effort to foster dialogue among priests about your shared priesthood and about the ministry you share with the bishop. Third, you are key to the engagement of the people of the Church in dialogue (1998, 69).

A priest might also require bishops to engage in dialogue with others and indeed a lay pastoral leader would have a similar obligation.[73] Mutuality and multilateral dialogue draw us back to the themes of Groome (1980) and the Whiteheads (1980; 1995). As Aspendale themes engaged Archdiocesan and wider Catholic experience, selected documents from the bishops of the Catholic Church were used in this study to gauge:

- historical and contemporary trends;
- patterns of dialogue that developed at grass-roots level;
- the response of those in leadership.

Pragmatic responses such as the clustering of parishes or the appointment of lay pastoral leaders instead of priests can have positive outcomes but if they neglect reflection, dialogue and praxis there are definite dangers and loss of integrity. Kaspar warns that

> one should also bear in mind that purely pragmatic solutions are often like comets, trailing theological implications and consequences in their wake ... to

[73] Hill uses organisational science to analyse *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*. He argues that "high trust" enables better communication and sense of community while "low trust" adds stressors that negatively affect performance. The document addressed the negative impact on spiritual life and ministry and identified an inadequate managerial rather than a pastoral model of ministry (2005, 153). It remained to be seen whether this imbalance would be corrected.

> avoid misunderstandings, we must think through the problems on the level of basic principles (2003, 47–48).

I argue in this report that these "basic principles" will include contemporary expressions of theological reflection. John Fuellenbach's four modes of theological reflection contribute to the development of theological insight. This method of theological reflection was chosen for its specific attention to Catholic and Conciliar frameworks, its qualitative empathy with the voice and experience of the local community and its emphasis on the need to be flexibly responsive to the Holy Spirit (2002, 104–107). Emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit does not mean there is a "hot line from here to the world beyond" (106). Fuellenbach suggests that we discover the essence of God's word in the ebb and flow of daily, historical life and subsequent engagement with the theological data of the tradition. We need contingent data to be interpreted through the lens of salvation history and then make decisions whether we use

> contingent data as the tools to interpret the theological or vice versa. The answer is simple. There is no either/or. It is in the interaction and confrontation of both the theological and the contingent that we will find who the God of history and the God of salvation really wants to be for us today (107).

Fuellenberg's four sources used in this report complement Kinast and the Whiteheads :

- Bible, Tradition and the Magisterium.
- The on-going life of the worshipping community.
- The life situation of the committed community.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit.

This method also blends effectively with a case study methodology using grounded theory where one of the goals is to track, identify and test themes as they emerge.[74]

4.2.4.1 Bible, Tradition and the Magisterium

Vatican II proposed that Tradition and Magisterium are at the service of the word of God. For George Tavard, "Scripture and tradition stand in a relationship of mutual

[74] The methodology chapter in this report synthesises qualitative research methodology and models of theological reflection. Fuellenbach's method offers a straightforward instrument for evaluating how Church documents are received and responded to by the Church. Flexibility and a lack of hierarchy of value enable all four sources to have an appropriate voice.

acceptance whenever the tradition is faithful to Scripture ,and Scripture can be shown to support the tradition" (1992, 155). Similarly *Dei Verbum* states that the Magisterium is not above God's word, "it rather serves God's word" (no. 10). When confronted with innumerable anomalies, inconsistencies and obvious human error, this interaction becomes what James Whitehead calls "the imaginative interplay of authorities" where

> the goal of ecclesial reflection on our tradition is always twofold, to recover and overcome. We seek to recover the gracefulness of God's involvement in our heritage, and overcome our repeated misapprehensions of these gifts (1987, 37).[75]

For authentic theological reflection there must be a balanced and reciprocal relationship between one's own story, lived experience in a particular community and the established faith tradition (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995). When we seek to "interpret situations as a theological hermeneutic" we must own a viewpoint and a context of faith that requires a special approach (Farley 2000, 119).[76] The purpose of theological reflection is to embrace the tradition rather than attack it, and to open up the tradition, not marginalise it. This is not an easy or conflict-free (or conflict-habituated) journey given that

> [p]roponents of theological reflection speak just as often of a dialectical relationship and critical correlation - and in the case of feminist and inculturation styles of theological reflection, a hermeneutics of suspicion (Kinast 2000, 67).

4.2.4.2 The on-going life of the worshipping community

John Paul II observed in *Christifideles Laici* that in the years following Vatican II, the lay faithful themselves

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[75] It is not always a case of accepting or rejecting a particular doctrine or practice. Different eras offer different understandings or metaphors. Thomas O'Meara's historical understanding of the development of the Church's theology of ministry described six metamorphoses that became the six acts of a pageant. "Their variety describes not the entire story but the peaks along the cultural, ontological and pneumatic history of Christian ministry. The triumphs and the limitations of ministry - evangelist, bishop, priest, monk, *Herr Pastor, curé* - all these are the products of culture" (1983, 128).

[76] Farley names four elements: (i) identifying and describing distinctive features; (ii) exploration of the history and tradition behind the present situation; (iii) correct the abstraction committed by the focus on a single situation; (iv) and discernment of the pervasive themes of corruption and redemption in human beings that present us with "occasions for idolatry and for redemption" (119–122). This final element reflects the wisdom of the Whiteheads' "recover and overcome" approach, and Kaspar's warning about pragmatic solutions that trail theological implications and consequences in their wake.

> have acquired a more lively awareness of the tasks that they fulfil in the liturgical assembly and its preparation, and have become more widely disposed to fulfil them - the liturgical celebration, in fact, is a sacred action not simply of the clergy, but of the entire assembly (no. 23).

Fuellenbach argues that the "committed Christian community is in itself the native soil and context of all theological reflection" and their worshiping life is at the core (2002, 105). In 1995 the "committed Christian community" from the Catholic Institute of Sydney, represented by a mixture of lay, religious and ordained, men and women, addressed the issue, *Redefining the Church: Vision and Practice*. Greg Wilson asked "[w]hat is muddying the waters that both divide and connect notions of common and ordained ministry?" He suggested that in Australian experience several factors stood out, all of them relevant to Aspendale. They are:

- an inadequate theology of lay ministry in relationship to priests and bishops;
- conflicting views on the ministry of women;
- a reluctance to encourage lay preaching;
- the compelling and consuming urgency of the decline in vocations and the number of priests (1995, 47–48).

This critique is a factor in theological reflection whether it is Aspendale, Sydney or Australia speaking. *Lumen Gentium* affirms that the One Catholic Church exists and finds its reality in, through and out of particular Churches (no. 23). This should offer a "guarantee that the relationship between the whole Church and the individual churches is seen as one of reciprocal or mutual inclusion ... the one church does not exist except in and out of the many churches" (Komonchak 1999, 765). The on-going life of the worshipping community is a key factor in theological dialogue and reflection.

4.2.4.3 The life situation of the committed community

At a micro or local level the sub-title of Sofield and Kuhn's research methodology on leadership is illustrative of this source. *The Collaborative Leader: Listening to the Wisdom of God's People* describes selection criteria for research subjects who were

> lay people, currently employed, who truly live their Christian values in the marketplace ... we were not interested in interviewing anyone who was ordained, a member of a religious order, or a lay person working as a full-time ecclesial minister in the Church. Second, they would not be considered if their primary witness was what they did in the local church congregation rather than what they did in the workplace (1995, 215–216).

Their primary witness had to be in the "world" and they had to be recommended because of their spiritual and practical witness to Christian values. In an interview after the release of the book, Sofield found that missionally active Christians felt the Church was too ecclesiocentric and that "church leadership is focusing primarily on itself and its own internal problems" (1996, 48). Fuellenbach's third source serves to redress this imbalance because as reflection engages macro level sources, the concrete situation or contingent data can properly become the starting point of theology. He defines the starting point as the contingent data of life,

> that provide the categories, the language, the medium for theology. They are the concrete circumstances in which people have to live, their culture, their social, political and economic facts, as well as what we call the signs of the times (105–106).

There is another (and topically relevant) reason for employing this third source. We noted Costelloe's affirmation that the ordained ministry is best considered in relation to the priestly nature of the whole People of God. To understand the priesthood means we must also consider the relationship of all God's priestly people to Christ and

> thus to the whole world in which that People lives as a 'sacrament' of the salvific will of God made manifest in Christ. This involves a re-evaluation of the dualism inherent in such pairings as 'sacred/secular', 'holy/profane', and 'eternal/temporal' which feature significantly in John Paul's thought (1998, x).

Sofield and Kuhn's "wisdom people" and Fuellenbach's "committed community" are those who think, feel and respond in their culture and in their social, political and economic facts. A balanced method of theological reflection can ensure they are given a voice. The wisdom people who made up the committed community of Aspendale also need a voice.

4.2.4.4 The presence of the Holy Spirit

I hesitate to concur completely with Fuellenbach's four separate sources - I prefer to see the Holy Spirit as a cognate and integral theme that can be identified with, but not separated from, the other three sources. Fuellenbach's use of Pope Paul VI's encyclical introduces the concept of "mystery". Paul VI writes in *Ecclesiam Suam* that the "mystery of the Church is not a mere object of theological knowledge; it is something to be lived, something that the faithful soul can have a kind of connatural experience of, even before arriving at a clear notion of it" (n. 29). It is important that somewhere in the theologically reflective equation the committed and participating faithful assess the positive and negative aspects of the Church at work. "A recognition of the inner and supernatural dimension of theological epistemology is one of the major breakthroughs of our time. In this type of knowledge, theory and practice are inseparably united" (Dulles 1987, 27). What is this "connatural experience" or this "inner and supernatural dimension" that is essential for adequate reflection? The Whiteheads' describe a fully developed *sensus fidelium* where

> the experiential pole in ministry is not divorced from the Christian Tradition since the pole of experience refers to the accumulated experience of the minister and the community as shaped by the culture and also as formed by the Christian Tradition (1980, 19).

Does this experience have a supernatural dimension? The Whiteheads' cite elsewhere Walter Abbott's commentary on *The Documents of Vatican II.* "Thanks to the supernatural sense of the faith which characterises the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, 'from the bishops down to the last member of the laity,' it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals" (1966, 29). The emerging phenomenological questions, if ones experience is validated as a partner in dialogue with the Magisterium, can even become a "powerful, unerring expression of Christian faith" (19). Max van Manen's social scientific approach looks for the formulation of the phenomenological question of lived experience. It is not enough to record or recall experiences of a particular phenomenon. The meaning structures of the experience are recalled and described and we recognise this description as a potential interpretation of that experience. The task of phenomenological research and writing is "to construct a

possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (1990, 41). This interpretation can then be tested using the other sources of theological reflection as we have described them in the methodological rationale. As noted above, Pope Paul VI described mystery in *Ecclesiam Suam* as "something to be lived, something that the faithful soul can have a kind of connatural experience of, even before arriving at a clear notion of it" (no. 29). Fuellenbach's approach allows this experience to dialogue explicitly with the other sources. The Whiteheads' citation of Walter Abbott's commentary on *The Documents of Vatican II* is helpful. "Thanks to the supernatural sense of the faith which characterises the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when, 'from the bishops down to the last member of the laity,' it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals" (1966, 29). Similarly for James Mackey it is a mistake to identify the role of the Magisterium in Tradition with Tradition itself and in the process eliminate the *sensus fidelium* from the equation. The faithful are in no way passive as shown in the title of one of his chapters: "They bear active witness with the help of the Holy Spirit" (1962, 101–122). It is precisely this factor that enables the value of a case study and the analysed experience of the faithful to become part of the process of reflection and dialogue. Mackey cites Scheeben's (1948, 98) incisive conclusion that

> the profession of faith by the body of believers is not of value *only* by reason of the influence of the Magisterium which begets it, but possesses its own intrinsic, relatively autonomous value as a result of the direct working of the Holy Spirit on the faithful (121).

The research methodology in this study blended qualitative data analysis with theological reflection and thus developed this link more fully as the Aspendale themes gave a voice to this "intrinsic, relatively autonomous value."[77] Document-study in Chapter Five reveals positive and negative imbalance in the use of these four sources as those in leadership fail to engage the reflective capacity of believers.

4.3 Dialogue is not a Method, it is a Way of Life

Based upon the themes that emerged from the Aspendale project and subsequent engagement with relevant literature, this study contends that failure to engage in

[77] Note in Chapter Three, Kinast's threefold interpretive method: The Player; The Plot; The Place (1996).

adequate dialogue and theological reflection diminishes the possibility of an effective stage 3–4 transition. A deeper implication is that the success or otherwise of any particular project or experiment is hardly the issue, an important and assessable criterion should be the level of dialogue and theological reflection that is desired and achieved. If priests and laity are truly partners, if bishops and priests are truly partners, and if bishops and laity are truly partners then dialogue is not a fleeting connection but a sustained mutuality, fidelity and commitment that endures the difficulties of transition and continues to listen to partners.[78] The Whiteheads acknowledge that some initial enthusiasm has waned and though the advantages of collaborative ministry are well established, the costs are also well known in that the benefits

> of effectiveness and support are paid for in the coin of compromise and change. ... But today's commitment to shared ministry is less naïve and, for that reason, more willing to face the messy demands that collaboration makes (1991, 51–52).

Rademacher welcomes collaboration but this does not mean that lay ministers "will be substitutes for the missing clergy ... Partnership in the ministry is not a solution to the clergy shortage (1996, 169). What can we say about the relationship between Fuellenbach's sources of theological reflection? If Scripture and the Magisterium are truly partners, if the Holy Spirit is truly the Paraclete (Greek: called alongside; partner) engaging all the faithful, and if authentic worship is truly the partner of a committed, incarnational and justice-seeking missiology then the Church is doubly blessed. Mary Boys describes dialogue as a way of life where the key to development is perseverance.

> If the other is truly a partner, then the relationship must endure through tensions and difficulties - and it is a communication with a concrete not a generalised other; misunderstandings must be worked out in the particularities of the specific situation and participants. Partnership is not a temporary connection ... Dialogue, therefore, is not a mere method. *It is a way of life* ... (2000, 24).

Boys' description summarises the nature of the journey of experiment, research and theological reflection that characterised the Melbourne Archdiocese (bishops and priests) and the people of Aspendale (lay leader and parishioners). Until the change of policy, dialogue was an intrinsic part of the fabric of faith and was factored into the process of reflection and analysis of data as it emerged.

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[78] For a comprehensive theology of "ministry in a world of partners" see Whitehead and Whitehead (1991, 49–99).

Chapter 5

Document Analysis

5.1 The culture and practice of theological reflection

During the life of the project, official documents have articulated the dilemmas regarding lay and ordained priesthood, and collaborative ministry, some of which have been noted already.[1] Three criteria guided the critique of each document:

- How does the document articulate a theology of ordained ministry?
- What is the approach to the preparation and formation of priests for collaborative ministry?
- Is there a commitment to an environment of communicative competence? [2]

The documents selected for study provide an international perspective (with practical, issue-driven illustrations) and, more importantly, illustrate the prevailing culture and practice of dialogue and theological reflection.[3] To balance this perspective, many

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[1] 1994. John Paul II. *Address on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry.*
1997. Instruction. *On Certain Questions.*
1999. Congregation for the Clergy. *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community.* Strathfield: Paulist.
2003. Congregation for the Clergy. *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community.* This post-Aspendale document embodied pastoral appreciation of the complex relationship between priests and the hierarchy. "Internal dangers to the priestly ministry also exist: bureaucracy, functionalism, democratisation, planning which is more managerial than pastoral ... priests can be overwhelmed by structures which overpower them, are not always necessary, or which induce negative psycho-physical consequences detrimental for the spiritual life and the very ministry itself" (n. 29).

[2] Habermas' four stages are integrated with the methodology section.
a. Equal opportunity should be offered to each person to speak and contribute. This is not possible within a Church where, for example, a male patriarchal system does not allow equal freedom of expression (or influence) to women or where there is a hierarchy of decision-making modelled on a feudal system.
b. A balanced subject / object role is seen in: (i) the ability to influence theological perspectives; (ii) the maintenance of genuine dialogue; (iii) a mutuality in decisions about process.
c. Symmetry of modes of complementary communication should develop. Speaking and listening, questioning and answering, concealing and revealing, observing and responding, are all modes of communication that combine to form a creative dialogue where the flow of the process is owned and critiqued by all parties.
d. The same rules and norms should apply to all participants. No participant has any privileged position. Naturally there will be a variety of roles or persons will have selected expertise, but these will be interpreted and negotiated as required.

[3] A seminarian I interviewed was being trained to integrate all four sources of theological reflection (Fuellenbach 2002), but he often found that neither the documents nor the mode of communication easily matched his own formation in this discipline. Michael McEntee, writing in the era just before Aspendale, describes the "dialogical structure" of formation at the Melbourne Diocesan Seminary as "an interplay of our Catholic tradition with the person who is the student, himself a product of the tradition and the contemporary culture" (1989, 217). For seminarians, there is a deeper voice that echoes Fuellenbach's

documents, texts and research-findings from Melbourne and Australia are examined extensively throughout other sections of this report.[4] The three selected documents span the period of this study and abbreviations are indicated in brackets.

- 1995. *The Sign We Give*. (*Sign*) This report on collaborative ministry by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales represents the European, English-speaking dimension and highlights the key themes of the pre-Aspendale climate.[5]
- 1999. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions.* (LEM). The U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops represents a second national English-speaking body that explores emergent issues, research questions, commentary and suggestions on collaborative ministry.[6]
- 2000. A *Pastoral Letter on Ministry: As I Have Done for You.* (*Pastoral Letter*) The Archdiocese of Los Angeles represents a metropolitan, diocesan response.[7]

The leadership of all these Church constituencies had to respond to new patterns of ministry that presented both a challenge and a threat. Thomas O'Meara's historical survey of the theology of ministry has highlighted the need to identify and normalise the developmental stages of Catholic ministry as an evolutionary process that requires sensitive leadership.

> The six metamorphoses which ministry has undergone over two millennia are six acts of a pageant. Their variety describes not the entire story but the peaks along the cultural, ontological and pneumatic history of Christian ministry. The triumphs and the limitations of ministry - evangelist, bishop, priest, monk, *Herr Pastor, curé*, - all these are the products of culture (1983, 128).

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second and third sources - the voice of the People of God. This dialogue teaches the student "to hear the echoes of the voice of the Mass of people in their own consciousness and who have been consoled by hearing the Catholic Christian tradition's response ... " (218). This is training in dialogue.

[4] In the Christian tradition in which I minister, local and regional autonomy are both blessing and curse and I am still coming to understand the nature of Vatican communication and reception by the Church. However, those in authority still have to adapt "to a world-wide Church community that embraces so many different cultures and diverse local situations and that uses so many different languages, one more sensitive to the actual situation of those who are going to receive the communication, and one that clearly seeks to persuade rather than lay down the law" (Brundell 1998, 30). A balanced understanding of communicative competence requires those in power to ensure that "dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it be a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants (Freire 1970, 77). Theological reflection in any form, however inadequate, becomes further limited by impaired dialogue.

[5] Commissioned in 1992 in response to questions from the National Council of Priests.

[6] Retrieved on the internet, 22 June, 2002: www.nccbuscc.org/laity/laymin/layecclesial.htm.

[7] Retrieved on the internet, 22 June 2002: //cardinal.la-archdiocese.org/000420.htm.

Whitehead and Whitehead delineate qualitative changes in the theological, pastoral, structural and relational climate. They identify significant post-Vatican II departures from familiar and well-understood patterns of Church and ministry that take the form of five major shifts from:

- "hierarchical family" to "partnership and koinonia";
- an "abundance" of priests and religious vocations to decline and "scarcity";
- "wounded images of authority" to new images of "authority-making";
- triumphalism and colonisation to a "theology of failing";
- Christian leaders as "parents" to "ministry in a world of partners" (1991, 3–99).

The Whiteheads normalise this process by claiming that Christian ministry evolves "as each generation of believers responds to new and different needs. The shape of Christian leadership continues to change today as the process of authorising ministry moves forward" (1986, 142). The five major shifts set the scene for a post-conciliar, mid-eighties theology of leadership. The Whiteheads introduce the Hebrew Bible image of 'cloud' as a sign of journey and transition, illustrating the response of some Catholics to the challenges of the time (Exodus 40:36).[8] This reframe presents these apparent threats as clouds or shadows heavy with meaning rather than heavy with threat. These five dilemmas, or departures from the familiar patterns, therefore become five challenges as the Church remembers that clouds or shadows often indicate God's presence.[9] This was not the experience of all those in leadership.

In spite of Pope John Paul II's attempt at clarification in the midst of multiple interpretations of ministries,[10] there was already emerging a discernible fear "that lay ministry was encroaching on the ministries specifically identified with the ministerial priesthood" (Cozzens 2000, 8). Referring to the *On Certain Questions*, Cozzens notes that according to the Instruction "the blurring of roles and identities" was "one" factor in the decline in the numbers of priests (8). The Instruction outlines theological principles of the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. It is claimed that "numerical shortages" have given rise to mistakes in discerning the "nature and specific

[8] "At every stage of their journey, whenever the cloud rose from the tent the children of Israel would resume their march. If the cloud did not rise, they waited and would not march until it did" (Exodus 40: 36). The symbol denotes both the ongoing journey and the comforting presence of God.

[9] 'Creation' in Genesis 1:2. 'Annunciation' in Luke 1:35. 'Transfiguration' in Matthew 17. These all testify to God's saving presence in moments of *crisis*.

meaning" of the common priesthood, and these "encourage a reduction in vocations to the (ministerial) priesthood and obscure the specific purpose of seminaries as places of formation for the ordained ministry" (n. 2). While this simplistic, vague and tenuous logic is part of a section written to affirm the role and identity of the priest (not intended to be at the expense of the laity), it rather caused widespread anxiety and pain.[11] The expansion of lay roles was affirmed in the context of collaborative ministry but the relevant section closed with an unfortunate coda followed by a detailed list of corrective measures.[12]

> In the light of the aforementioned principles, remedies, based on the normative discipline of the Church, and deemed opportune to correct abuses which have been brought to the attention of our Dicasteries, are hereby set forth (n. 4).

The Congregation for the Clergy echoed the sentiment that it had "proven notoriously difficult to articulate a theology of lay ministry that does not turn the non-ordained minister into either a quasi-priest or a less than worldly layperson" (Barron 1999,18). The document had therefore to respond with affirmations concerning the priest as teacher and sacramental leader of the community.[13] The Congregation for the Clergy was responding to a commonly articulated analysis of the complex outcomes of expanding lay leadership. An Australian perspective, also reflected in the experience of the Aspendale Pastoral Leader noted that

> ... when non-ordained faithful collaborate in the sacred ministry of the priest all necessary care must be taken to ensure that the sacramental effectiveness of the ordained minister is not obscured, and that the lay participant in pastoral ministry is not clericalised (Brundell 1998, 28).[14]

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[10] John Paul II. *Address on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry.*1994.

[11] This critique is supported extensively in other sections of this study.

[12] The thirteen Articles cover the language of titles, homilies, parish leadership roles, collaborative relationships, liturgical protocols, and various pastoral services.

[13] Barron is referring to the subsequent document released in 1999 - *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*. It would seem that the situation was still confused and the Instruction had been ineffective or unhelpful.

[14] It is not as if the Instruction entered a passive arena. There was vigorous debate in Australian Journals, and worldwide, throughout the middle to late 90s. A sample of pre-Instruction 1997 is illuminating. Goosen from the Australian Catholic University reviews the phases of Church history and foreshadows even wider changes as the clericalism of the Tridentine priesthood gives way to "a sense of belonging more to the community than a conscious sociological belonging to a clerical stratum in the Church (1997, 24). Putney argues for a more open model of priesthood. However, in contrast to the accessibility of Goosen's wider ordination criteria that also prefers the title 'pastor' to 'priest,' he embraces Barron's concept of 'bearer of the mystery' the mystagogue "who is separate, unique, set apart - in the language of Scripture, holy" (1997, 15).

It became clear as the drama of collaborative ministry unfolded that the old scripts of judiciary instruments and pastoral governance had become unwieldy and tended to reject dialogue in favour of pronouncement. Monika Hellwig's address to the Seminary Department of the U.S. National Catholic Educational Association directs us to the oft forgotten spiritual, relational and communal themes embodied in the conflict emerging between those who work in the field and those who make and enact policy.

> Authentic relationships must be recovered; the relationship with God and the interrelationships among creatures. The impossibility of community, of authentic collaboration must be transcended. It cannot be done by conquest, by force, by bullying. It cannot be done by making laws and rules ... It is in order to be in authentic relationship to God that each must respect the complementarity of experience, talent, competence, vision and claims among fellow human beings (1999, 10).[15]

This relational, egalitarian agenda forms the basis of community and stimulates dialogue and closeness as opposed to pronouncement and distance. For both priests and lay leaders it is therefore not for our "aggrandisement or for the consolidation of our power that we exist; it is only for the sake of the body. It is in this common subordination to a good beyond ourselves that all of us enjoy a legitimate equality" (Barron 1999, 20). Eight months after the Instruction, Brundell wrote that the "dust has settled a little now, but the wounds are still hurting (1998, 26).[16] What are the wounds and what are the origins of these wounds? The themes of Brundell's irenic and balanced discussion of this document will be examined later in this chapter but I noted in an interview that one seminarian pointed out the value of analysing the dialogical style of these documents. We discussed the lack of quality of theological reflection and dialogue in official documents and the negative effect this has upon someone in the midst of formation who is constantly being encouraged to reflect theologically. He was looking for teachers and leaders who believed that if we intend to teach in ways

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[15] Peter Connelly's critique of Goosen's position robustly upholds the teaching of Pius XI and Pius XII and even suggests that teachers at a catholic institution should "have a far greater responsibility to the *Magisterium* of the Church than they have to its declared opponents (1998, 38). The debate is lively and relevant, and, if dialogue is to be stimulated rather than suppressed or marginalised greater sophistication than that of the Instruction is required. Authentic relationships cannot be expressed in ways that are experienced as conquest, force or bullying - at any level of the Church.

[16] The title of Brundell's article is immediately confronting: "Rome has Spoken." He accepts the key issues within the Vatican document but is appalled at the manner of communication.

> that are transformative, then is not dialogue fundamental? If we are concerned with teaching persons to understand what it means to follow a way of life faithfully, then are not 'engaged pedagogies' requisite? If dialogue is essential, then in what ways might we embody it (Boys 2000, 25)?[17]

Sofield and Juliano's outline of the four stages of development of collaborative ministry is built on research at parish and diocesan and national level. If leadership patterns come from the top, it is reasonable to suggest that the four stages are also true at the International level. The struggle to implement collaborative ministry had practical implications for priests, religious and lay leaders as they wrestled with their sense of identity and meaning within the Church. This study explores how the struggle to maintain shared praxis is an essential aspect of theological education, theological reflection and faith development. Groome's understanding of shared praxis hinges on dialogue (1980; 1989). His five movements of theological reflection are similar to Browning's schema of four movements, but Groome's methodology arises within a Catholic context and the five stages noted below informed practice during the years leading up to our study.

- Describe and outline current praxis.
- Reflect critically upon current praxis.
- Introduce and interweave the Christian Story and Vision.
- Set up a dialectical hermeneutic that engages current praxis and interpretations of the Christian Story and Vision.
- Develop a process of decision-making and response in order to commence a new cycle of praxis (1989, 89–90).

This document study seeks to integrate Groome's five criteria with Kinast's model of theological reflection as developed in *Let Ministry Teach* (1996). The template for evaluation and theological reflection has been outlined in Chapter Two.

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[17] The candidate, though strongly affirmed by formators, decided not to seek ordination or apply to take Final Vows for a variety of reasons. These included: (i) models of ordained ministry that were not attractive; (ii) current and future pressures on priests indicated a stressful and unhealthy lifestyle; (iii) limited criteria for eligibility of ministry; (iv) lack of collegial respect and dialogue within the Church (2002, personal communication). The candidate was looking at the future to see if he could discern a dialogical arena with "a continuous, developmental communicative interchange through which we stand to gain a fuller apprehension of the world, ourselves, and one another" (Burbules 1993, 8). He couldn't - at that time – to the great disappointment to his teachers.

5.1.1 *The Sign We Give (1995)*[18]

This report on collaborative ministry by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales responded to questions raised by the National Council of Priests in 1992. The Bishops affirmed a climate following Vatican II, in which

> a new type of collaboration between lay-people and the clergy has happily come about in the Church. The spirit of readiness in which a great number of lay-people have offered themselves for the service of the Church must be counted among the best benefits of the Council. In this there is a new experience of the fact that we are all the Church (1985, 2.C.6).[19]

Fr Roderick Strange is reported in the *Tablet*[20] as enthusiastically affirming the dialogical process behind the document because

> it is evidence of the quality of our talk which led to the initiative; it is fruit of our work, something we had caused to be done; and its very subject affirms the need for our distinct presbyteral voice. A tamed voice will not do (1184).

This comment indicates a high level of ownership by priests and a corresponding expectation of on-going quality dialogue. Lay involvement in the working party was proportionally high.[21] The report concludes with six study guides designed to encourage reflection on the theology and practice of collaborative ministry.[22] The document is

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[18] This document reported on the inquiry that was thematically organised as noted below:
Part 1: A Church in Mission - The Context for Collaborative Ministry.
Part 2: Collaborative Ministry - Experience and Theology.
Part 3: Collaborative Ministry in practice.
Part 4: Collaborative Ministry in five settings.
Concluding Summary of practical steps towards Collaborative Ministry.
Appendix I: Background and terms of reference of the Working Party.
Appendix II: Material for study and discussion.

[19] Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 1985. This is cited as one of the introductory, guiding quotations for the document.

[20] 16th September 1995.

[21] Three priests made up the Theology Committee. They were joined by one bishop, five priests, one religious sister, and nine lay persons. There were nine women within this group of nineteen.

[22] The *Pastoral Letter* also employed case studies and scenarios to encourage contextualised reflection. The Study Guides from the UK are realistic, relevant and theologically probing and have the same function (*Sign* - Appendix 2). They have a thematic approach (inclusive language, the Trinity, leadership, collaborative ministry, celebration, conflict and growth) located within a worship experience with a focus upon relevant Scripture readings. The pattern of reflection is similar to that of Kinast's *Let Ministry Teach*. Description of, and entering into experience, is followed by group theological reflection on how the text relates to the experience. Further listening and reflection apply and test the insights and then there is a focus on 'acting differently.' See Kinast (1996) for illustrations of this methodology and Groome (1980;

effective as a report and as a commentary on 'practice.' Rather than giving directive theological teaching, it enables readers to reflect theologically on specific issues. However, there is no attempt to outline a contributory and explorative theology of priesthood before the reflective sections. For example, "Part Two, Collaborative Ministry, Experience and Theology", offers a commentary on Vatican teaching using key texts.[23] Although the ministerial nature of the whole Church is upheld, and the document supports "how the ordained ministries have the distinctive role of serving, drawing out and unifying this ministerial character," no attempt is made to state or challenge policy. The emphasis is on developing questions.[24] This opportunity to provide theological leadership and engage the Magisterium from the perspective of grass roots experience and reflection is not explored by the bishops. The document includes extensive sympathetic reporting of tension regarding the role of women, SWAP, overwork, and clericalism but lacks any consistent attempt to revisit or reopen the debate on theological criteria for ordination.[25] This inevitably compromises wider discussion of the implications of collaborative ministry for the Church, because the challenging voices of priests and laity do not become the articulated, theological agenda of the bishops.

The Sign We Give affirms the development of an "ecclesiology of communion" and the layperson's full share in the life, holiness and mission of the Church based upon "relationships characterised by equality, mutuality and reciprocity."[26] A celebratory tone undergirds the document, notwithstanding the difficulty of role clarification and the pressure of identity issues. The problems of evolving concepts and expressions of authority are outlined and authority is clearly "not a possession but a relationship

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1991) and Browning (1991) for a comprehensive theoretical base. Kinast (2000) provides a comparative base using other methodologies.

[23] *Lumen Gentium, Christifideles Laici, Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are used freely.

[24] *Sign.* Part II: Exploring What Ministry Means. This states that the documents of the Church "do not yet provide answers to all these questions" and while this is the case "there can be a danger of creating a two-tier pattern of formal ministries and other ministries." At this point the report fails to do anything other than to report. There are allusions to the Magisterium, and readers are given some excellent reflection tasks, but there is no challenging exploration of theological issues. This absence of theological leadership that addresses important concerns and anxiety is a source of disappointment to both priests and lay people.

[25] *Sign.* Part 2: Collaborative Ministry: Experience and Theology.

[26] *Sign.*Part II: Sharing in the Life of God. Extensive discussion of Vatican II teaching is woven through the text to support observations on current practice and affirm the new dignity and freedom of all the baptised. This new spirit is evidenced in the growth of paid lay pastoral workers, the development of RCIA and sacramental programs and extended pastoral outreach through lay ministers.

between the members of the body."[27] Once again there is the tension that Sofield and Juliano pinpoint in the stage 3-4 transition: Who has the power to implement this new ethos of authority? Donal O'Leary, Episcopal Vicar for Christian Formation in Leeds, UK, received a draft copy of the report prior to publication and offered a response. His position describes the tension of transition.

> It can in fact be argued that it is not so much the laity who are there to help the hierarchy with the running of the Church. It is the other way around. The hierarchy helps the Church to exercise its ministry. ... (the priest's) function is *within* the body in the service of the reign of God, not in charge of it. ... It is about 'pastoral leadership' (1995, 555).

The document highlights the problem that

> [a]lthough our theology describes hierarchy as a form of service, it is not always felt or seen as such. ... many people approach it with the assumption that it is 'power over others'. Indeed in the past, this assumption moulded attitudes, language and relationships in the Church. Many aspects of the culture of the Church still reflect this way of thinking, impeding the growth of an atmosphere which supports collaborative ministry."[28]

There is a positive commitment to undertake "persistent work to change these attitudes and assumptions,"[29] but there is limited commitment to theological leadership. The following questions that arise in the document neither offer nor elicit practical suggestions, nor do they support theological reframes that witness to changing theological priorities:

> Which tasks are formal public ministries, and which are simply forms of service, spontaneously given? In which ministries should lay people be formally commissioned and why? Which ministries should have the more formal and stable kind of recognition known as institution, at present only available in Canon Law for lectors and acolytes, and then only for men? Why are Eucharistic ministers formally commissioned, but not catechists? What is the relationship between ministries exercised by the baptised, and the role of priests?[30]

The document does not move on from *illustration* (recognising and describing the familiarity of the context and issue) to *application.* which is "adapting one's theology

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[27] *Sign.* Part II: Hierarchy in the Context of Communion.
[28] *Sign.* Part II: Hierarchy in the Context of communion.
[29] *Sign.* Part II: Hierarchy in the Context of Communion.

from its customary context of abstract thought ... . This entails the possibility of changing one's theological priorities or emphases" (Kinast 1996, 97).

Written in the same year that the working group commenced, Daniel Donovan's concluding comments in his overview of the ministerial priesthood catch the spirit (if not the reflective method) of *The Sign We Give* and O'Leary's position. Donovan's 'theological tour' moves from Congar, Rahner and Ratzinger to Galot, Schillebeeckx and Cooke with a brief visit to Tavard, O'Meara, Kilmartin and Dulles. He concludes that attempts

> to reduce contemporary theological discussions in this area to a contrast between functional and ontological understandings are not, in the end, very helpful. None of the authors ... holds a merely 'functional' view of office. If some of them react in the name of pastoral concerns against an approach that emphasises a way of life that separates the ordained from the laity, they recognise that ministry is a profound religious reality, marked by the gift of the Spirit and demanding genuine holiness of life (1992, 139).[31]

Surely ministry as "a profound religious reality" is a hallmark for both lay and ordained. However, the document does not suggest, for example, a ritual for the commencement of a ministry that "identifies that service as a service of the Church and not merely the service of an individual Christian (Wood 2000, 182). The document stops short of what Kinast calls "theological reflection as interpretation". After moving through critical questions Kinast's method explores "alternative explanations." He explains, "when enough alternative explanations come together to form a new pattern and give a more adequate account of experience, it is called a paradigm shift" (1996, 125). Theological reflection carefully explores the meaning of events and is "alert to the possibility that this meaning may in fact be an alternative explanation of some point of existing theology" and thus gives voice to the fact that

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[30] *Sign.* Part II: Exploring What Ministry Means.

[31] Bernard Cooke's discussion of the sacramental character of orders concludes with the statement that the new priest "undertakes the corporate responsibility and contributes to the corporate activity of the group. ... [this] implies no denial of the classic teaching that ordination confers a special power of orders, a sacramental character. Rather, it opens up the way for giving such teaching a more ecclesial interpretation and for explaining what is essentially a societal (relational) reality in societal terms, rather than trying to fit it into an anthropology of intrinsic powers of action" (1976, 643–644).

> [u]nlike illustration and application, interpretation actually changes a person's theology. It also changes the person, because one's theology is an expression of oneself. The change may not be radical but it alters to some degree a person's theological understanding, which in turn changes the person's relationship to an experience (127–128).

This complements dialogue. The document outlines successfully the concerns and issues born out of experience. However it is more descriptive of action and practice in the context of a "given" theology (that therefore limits practice), than a discussion of a theology of ministry that can enhance and extend practice. It provides a clear and helpful review of the issues emerging with these new patterns of ministry, but there is limited theological reflection on the presuppositions underlying power, authority, theology of ministry and the status quo. It suggests that those who have adequate theological formation and a commitment to dialogue may be willing to let their experience interpret their theology. O'Leary's frustration shows when this does not happen.

> There are huge issues at stake here for the future of our Church. Some of these are issues of nerve ... We are all so afraid of conflict ... We need guidance from those who can read the signs of the times ... we need lots of courage to move out into new roles and responsibilities. There is a harvest of divine energy in the people we meet every day waiting to be recognised and released (1995, 560).

The report presents the aims and objectives with the intended goal of outlining "some relevant theological principles."[32] This seems to disappear in the face of the task of simply describing developing patterns, identified problems, practical realities and existing experience.

The theological principles in "Part II: Collaborative Ministry: Experience and Theology" briefly present an outline of the current status of the dilemmas surrounding authority, roles of priest and bishop, leadership and mission.[33] There is little evidence of wrestling with the ideas of any of the contemporary theologians whose writing also mirrors the experience of the Church and whose insights offer an exploratory vision. The Report seems more like thick data and a summary of themes rather than an integrated process of theological reflection. We read that with "the expansion and development of

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[32] *Sign.* Appendix I.

[33] O'Leary paraphrases Edmund Burke: "The *status quo* thrives, not when fearful people do fearful things, but when silent prophets do nothing" (1995, 560).

ministry and ministries" questions develop around the distinction between all forms of ministry, ordained or otherwise, but unfortunately "the documents of the Church do not yet provide answers to all these questions".[34] The style of reporting consistently undervalues the purpose and content as a strategic contributor to dialogue that engages the Magisterium. Continual reflection on practice is affirmed, because this will help to "clarify the identity of each vocation" and thus "deepen both the theology of ministry and the theology of priesthood."[35] However, very little of the excellent descriptive and authoritative content of the Report is used to develop and direct to the hierarchy, questions focused on the theology of ministry and priesthood. This will presumably happen only from middle management downwards as grass-roots Catholics use the study guides.

O'Leary's critique identifies three themes descriptive of day-to-day reality for all ecclesial leaders: "roles"; "the challenge of change"; and the "nature of collaborative meetings" (557–559). This practical focus reflects the pragmatic balance of the report. There are positive reframes (a cynic might call it spin-doctoring) rather than robust debate on the contentious issues. For example, O'Leary highlights a renewed theology of hierarchy that attempts to reframe collaborative ministry as "a way of finding a harmony between the *authority* of orders and the authority of the baptised" (1995, 557). For O'Leary, the concept of hierarchy as a unifying structure "rather like the membranes in a leaf" is a neatly presented idea but an absent reality with which "not everyone would agree" (557). A commentator in the *Tablet*[36] looks at the reality of life for most Catholics and concurs that "unfortunately many people still think of hierarchy as power over others" (1185). The document argues that the authority of all the baptised and the authority of office should be "ordered to each other" and "respond positively to the other. Collaborative ministry is a way of finding a harmony between these that serves communion."[37] An effective way of finding harmony is to use every opportunity for theological dialogue that embodies, at all levels, Burbules' rules of participation, commitment and reciprocity (1993). If effective dialogue is a "harmony ... that serves communion" then the Church can avoid a counter-productive scenario because

[34] *Sign.* Part II: Exploring What Ministry Means.
[35] *Sign.* Part II: Exploring What Ministry Means.
[36] September 16 1995.

> every form of dialogical engagement can fall into patterns that become anti-dialogical. Debate can become an argument; inquiry can become an obsessively narrow, ends-driven endeavour; conversation can become a meandering chat that leads nowhere important or interesting; instruction can become manipulative (Burbules 1993, 143).

The document considers ministry in its widest sense, articulating the questions and dangers that had been encountered in England and Wales.[38] The same *Tablet* article listed the contentious themes mirrored in other parts of the Catholic Church and concludes with a sharp critique:

> The report refuses to settle the question of whether collaborative ministry is an option or a necessity, a process of mild evolution or a radical reshaping of the Church (1185).

This judgment, I believe, arises because the report defaults on Kinast's final stages of theological reflection. Sofield and Juliano's fourth stage remains tantalisingly out of reach when supporters of collaborative ministry forget that it "is a gradual and mutual evolution of new patterns, new attitudes and new self-understanding, which will not happen by accident. It must be chosen and consciously pursued from conviction" (O'Leary 1995, 558). The document notes that "collaborative ministry can as easily become as rigid and confining as more traditional patterns of ministry." It is "a spirit of dialogue and the habit of presenting opposing positions in the best possible light" that will make the difference.[39] For successful transition into stage four, a model of theological and reflective dialogue has to be formulated but as noted above, limited theological reflection is a hindrance in itself.

The document refers to *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (n. 26) affirming a theology of priestly ministry in light of communion ecclesiology. Allusions to *Lumen Gentium's* "hierarchical priesthood" (n. 12) and *Christifideles Laici's* "character of orders" (n. 23) blend with discussion concerning the authority of all baptised, but there is no forward-looking discussion or theological critique about the real locus of power and how and

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[37] *Sign.* Part II: Hierarchy in the Context of Communion.
[38] *Sign.* Part III: Collaborative Ministry in Practice.
[39] *Sign.* Part III: Barriers to Growth in Collaborative Ministry.

where this can be used.[40] I agree with O'Leary's claim that "ambiguity also surrounds the concept of leadership" (557), particularly when there is no clear unravelling of what hierarchical priesthood actually means. When history intersects with present challenges and possibilities, a "theology of the presbyterate can only be developed within a total ecclesiology" (Donovan 1992, 139). Costelloe clarifies the ambiguity in the teaching of John Paul II on this issue (1998, 311–379; 2005). One could suggest that John Paul II was allowed to remain ambiguous because the bishops (as in *The Sign We Give*) mute the voice of the people and because theological reflection is inadequate. Wood argues that the four concepts of Church,

> the monarchical, Mystical Body of Christ, People of God, and sacrament are evident in the conciliar documents and influence the theology and practice of ordained ministry today. The monarchical model still dualistically divides the world between the sacred and the profane, allocating the sacred to the ordained ministers and the profane to the laity. Perhaps the lines are not as clearly drawn as they once were, but such recent documents as *[On Certain] Questions* ... witness to its continued presence (2000, 23–24).

As long as these questions remain unanswered there can be a danger of creating a two-tier pattern of formal ministries and other ministries, but *The Sign We Give* neither declares where the final authority and power lies nor contributes much to clarify this problem.[41] It does include an idealistic belief that ultimately "what matters is that we live communion in the Church" and in this way we "build a civilisation of love" even though "the documents of the Church do not yet provide all the answers to emerging questions."[42] However the traditional language of Church documents still refers to a hierarchical priesthood in which a strong lead from bishop or priest is one of the factors which most eases the path towards collaborative ministry. The bishop's

> style of leadership and his proposals for diocesan life will give clear messages about what this means in practice. In particular, he can affirm patterns of collaborative ministry and give priority to structures and plans that make it possible.[43]

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[40] *Sign.* Part I: The Influence of Vatican II.
[41] *Sign.* Part II: Exploring What Ministry Means. *Lumen Gentium* is quoted: "[Christ] continually provides in his body, that is, in the Church, for gifts of ministries" (n. 12).
[42] *Sign.* Conclusion.
[43] *Sign.* Part II: The Role of the Bishop. Stage 3–4 transition again requires strategic leadership.

The concept of authority is seen as a relationship between members of the body and not a possession, but the operational theology and practice of some bishops and priests will give the lie to this. The document does not address this discrepancy. I believe the tenor of this document illustrates Sofield and Juliano's third stage of response to collaborative ministry where ambiguous commitments surface when those who make the ultimate decisions wilt in the face of challenge. A Melbourne seminarian commented in interview that the practical implications "of the vision can be described, yet this leads to little new theological reflection on ministry or priesthood where old theologies remain in the wings and can still demand centre stage whenever they choose." Freire, echoing Kinast's final stages of reflection claims that

> action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection ... it is necessary to trust in the oppressed (sic) and in their ability to reason. Whoever lacks this trust will fail to initiate (or will abandon) dialogue, reflection, and communication, and will fall into using slogans, communiqués, monologues, and instructions (1968, 52–53).

A detailed summary of the document and a variety of commentaries that appeared in the *Tablet* article also indicated this ambivalence. They noted in response to the recommendation regarding parish transitions that "one of the most painful experiences is when a new priest halts or reverses progress" (1185). Seven years later the *Tablet* published the letter of an Australian parishioner who expresses similar views on the issue of authority.

> In parishes it is not unknown for a newly appointed parish priest to feel that it is his decision alone to undo the accepted practices of that community, no longer wanting readers or eucharistic ministers or pastoral assistants, and there seems to be no redress (15).[44]

In the Aspendale project this occurred at a higher level in 1997 when the new Archbishop reversed aspects of previously researched and enacted policy that reflected the wishes of the diocese. Almost ten years later the Melbourne Senate of Priests reported the disillusionment of many regions with the dislocation of the Tomorrow's Church process (Minutes of meeting No. 262). The Aspendale report is itself a part of that dislocation.

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[44] 21st September 2002.

The document does move beyond helpful pastoral comments on the practice of collaborative ministry and the need for "relational maturity" to handle change[45] by highlighting the teaching in *Lumen Gentium* that the pastoral and sacramental role remains vital and is "primarily about service" and relationship (n. 21, 24, 27).[46]
How will this teaching be interpreted if the principle of the authority of all the baptised is juxtaposed with the authority of orders or office? There is no theological guidance on this issue other than allusions to *Lumen Gentium.* Relational power or authority is the capacity to influence others and, in turn, be influenced by them and "where relational power is in operation people help to create each other" (Edwards 1987, 95). Relational power requires a communal dimension in which neither party loses identity or freedoms. Fuellenbach's methodology requires the experience of the worshiping community and the life situation of the committed community to engage Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium in a manner respectful of the Holy Spirit. Such reflection is also a form of systemic thinking, and, in this sense the bishops who authorise the report do so as a bridge between the worshiping, committed community and the Magisterium. Brian McDermott aligns spiritual sensitivity with systemic thinking.

> Those in formal authority who wish to be spiritually alert and to find God in all dimensions of organisational life, need to pay attention not only to interior data and interpersonal data, but also data about the system, the organisation as a whole, which itself is swayed by various spirits (2000, 57).

The idealised conclusion to *The Sign We Give* tells the reader that ultimately what matters is that "we live communion in the Church and ... build a civilisation of love".[47] O'Leary does not see this as satisfying either his brother priests who are fearful of becoming powerless "employees" of the parish or lay persons who feel a "sense of an oppression that has rendered them powerless in voicing their opinions and feelings" (556). The underlying theology of ministry and the teaching of the Magisterium as it attaches to the identity of both ordained and non-ordained has not been engaged. Again illustrating Sofield and Juliano's third phase, the report refuses to settle the question of whether this phase of lay development was an option or necessity, mild evolution or

[45] *Sign.* Part II: The Role of the Priest.
[46] *Sign.* Part II: Hierarchy in the Context of Communion.
[47] *Sign.* Conclusion.

radical reshaping of the Church. Perhaps the following quotation simply attempts to keep the peace?

> It is not possible, or desirable, to exclude any of these views, nor to prove any one of them definitively correct. The very basis of collaboration ... demands that we include, accept and value different paces of growth and varying convictions.[48]

There was little consistent integration of Fuellenbach's four important sources of theology. The *Bible* is interpreted through the lens of the *Tradition* and the *Magisterium*.[49] Scripture is referred to directly only on two occasions in the body of the report and there is a single reference to a theologian.[50] The insecurity and pain from Fuellenbach's other source, *The Ongoing Life of the Worshiping Community*, becomes lost in description rather than formulated into probing and visionary questions. When the document specifically addresses the role of the priest, for example, it asserts that a communion ecclesiology indicates a change in the identity and role of the priest reflecting a welcome relational aspect to ministry. The pastoral and sacramental role remains vital,[51] but there is no guidance or discussion on how to distinguish this role from the many other emerging and fluid forms of ministry.[52] Fuellenbach's second source, *The Life Situation of the Committed Community*, is effectively invisible. Although the report concludes that collaborative mission can work in a parish if a commitment is expressed in a language "of equal terms and equal valuing,"[53] there is no acknowledgment that the priest retains the power to veto such a basis for collaboration. This anomaly provides a loophole for those who resist the stage 3-4 transition. Murnion emphasises the need for priests to experience "mandatory post-seminary formation" that included being trained to "perform the work of ministry effectively" in relationship with brother priests and a growing number of lay leaders, including large numbers of women (2000, 20). The ordained must have,

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[48] *Sign.* Conclusion.

[49] I am not a biblicist but the document is an inadequate model of biblical reflection. There are ten Papal, Council and Synodal documents cited. They all use Scripture but they are essentially interpretations and still need to be "not above God's Word" and "serve the Word" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 10). See also Fuellenbach (2002, 105) and Tavard (1992, 153–170) for discussion of the relationship between Scripture and the Magisterium.

[50] Introduction - John 17:22–23. Part I - no reference. Part II - Galatians 3:28. Part III - no reference. Part IV - no reference. Appendix II - numerous references in this, the study guide.
See also Part III - reference to a theological text and quotation (Henri de Lubac 1982, 91).

[51] A reference to *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (n. 12).

[52] *Sign.* Part II: The Role of the Priest.

> a strong sense of the baptismal charism of the laity, their responsibility for their own conscience, their gifts for the Church, and their responsibility for helping to shape and carry out the mission of the Church in the world ... Will the newly ordained ... be able to make sound adaptations to the needs of the people or the situation, neither so rigid nor so relativist that they resort to authoritarianism or relativism in teaching and worship (21)?

Murnion differs from Robert Barron in his description of the dual role of priest as bearer of the mystery and doctor of souls. Murnion suggests that "Christ and the community are the bearers of the mystery and doctors of the soul" (20). In collaborative ministry the priest and laity have leadership in these ministries and, without a mutual interest, co-responsibility and reflective partnership, mission will be severely curtailed. Rahner argues that if priesthood does not have a mystical dimension then it has nothing at all (1968). The relational, partnership dimension to this mystery does not distance the priest from the needs, ideas, insights, critique and passions of the lay faithful, but rather, according to Dermot Power, "this mysticism leads him to a bond of love that less transcendent models of engagement might not sustain (1998, 130).

The possibility of mandatory post-seminary formation in collaborative ministry would seem like a sound practical response from the U.K. bishops. It would seem that the real work happens at a higher level and there is little or no permission for authentic dialogue from below, or from those at grass roots level, with the tradition or the Magisterium. The grass roots Church in England and Wales is not a uniform and monochrome group. Jack Dominian sketches a helpful summary of the three separate contemporary 'Churches'.

- The first 'Church' consists of those formed in the pre-Vatican II climate of obedience, orthodoxy, clear-cut morality, dutiful Mass attendance and reception of the sacraments. They were comfortable with the status quo and unlikely to challenge it. They were a strong majority.
- The second 'Church' consists of those whose faith was profoundly changed by Vatican II. They were passionate about pastoral structures that expressed mutuality and decentralisation, ecumenism, liturgical reform, the expansion of ministry by the laity, and the development of Christian community rather than the salvation of the

[53] *Sign.* Part II: Equal Terms and Equal Valuing.

individual soul. Statistically this group is a small percentage of those who attend Mass. Dominian predicted that by the time the first 'Church' died off the second 'Church' would have lost many through attrition.

- As the first 'Church' shrinks through death the third 'Church' will emerge from the baptised young who still believe in God. They have an integrated morality with a different focus (particularly sexually), a strong sense of social justice, a deep sense of the meaning of love in personal relationships, and an innate sense of prayer and the transcendent. They form a sensitive group "but without having the least desire to attach themselves to the institutional Church" (1985, 900).

While risky, the Church at all levels must engage in a comprehensive and multi-level model of theological reflection that provides a basic tool for the contemporary seminarian who, if Murnion's suggestions are accepted, would experience a reflective and collaborative culture pre and post ordination.[54] Each 'Church' naturally has different needs and desires and requires diverse patterns of listening and response, but this will always be the case. The danger is that, in the face of such complexity, those in leadership will default to pragmatic consultation (without Fuellenbach's basic schema) and thus deprive each 'Church' of a voice and the opportunity to name their story and identity before those who have the power to extensively affect their lives.

> Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words with which men (sic) transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. [We] are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection (Freire 1970, 76).

The concept of 'naming' suggests the offer of an opportunity to dialogue and thus articulate values and beliefs in order to construct a new future. Wood, citing American bishops, suggests that the ordination service could include reciprocal questions expressing commitment to collaborative ministry. This practical illustration of dialogue emerging as praxis supporting an agreed philosophy of ministry is not seen in *The Sign We Give*. Liturgical possibilities would involve,

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[54] See Kinast (1996; 2000); Killen and de Beer (1994); Whitehead and Whitehead (1995). Each text is a primer for theological students.

> questioning the people whether they are willing to support the candidates, and asking the elect regarding their willingness to consult or work with the laity. The second possibility underscores the collaborative relationship between pastors and the laity described in *Lumen Gentium* no. 37 (2000, 91).[55]

According to this direction priests should, in relationship with lay people,

> willingly use their prudent advice ... confidently assign duties to them ... to undertake works on their own initiative [and] with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity (no. 37).

At a theoretical level this in no way reflects a theology of communion with equality among all who share in that relationship (cf *Lumen Gentium*, no. 32), indeed it seems paternalistic. At a practical level however, *The Sign We Give* is realistic in pointing out financial inequalities in pay structures, threats based on perceived competency differences between lay and ordained, and tensions around ministerial identity. It also affirms that

> [w]orking on equal terms, and indeed the whole of what collaborative ministry involves, does not in any way undermine the essential ministry of the priest. The identity of different vocations and gifts is not blurred by this way of working; on the contrary, they should emerge more distinctively.[56]

Skilful and well-formed priests and lay leaders who have shared some formation experiences are not being true to "a radical and true equality" (*Lumen Gentium* n. 32) if they are framing their collaboration in popularised and unhelpful concepts. Communicative dynamics, as suggested by concepts such as "advice," "suggestions and desires" and assigning "duties" in the context of "paternal love," do not begin to develop effective dialogue.

The question of "Who has the ultimate power?" lies behind this language and is never effectively answered. It bears repeating that the document empathically reports that "one of the most painful experiences taking place in parishes and pastoral teams today is when progress is made, and then halted or reversed by a new priest arriving."[57]

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[55] This originally appeared in September 1992 in the United States Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Newsletter*. 28, no. 34.
[56] *Sign*. Part II: Equal Terms and Equal Valuing.
[57] *Sign*. Part II: The Role of the Priest.

The bishops' suggestion that an urgent "look at how transition in parish staffing is arranged"[58] does not engage or seek to clarify easily abused elements in the Magisterium. Without theologically reflective documents from those in authority that take seriously Fuellenbach's (I believe minimum) schema, the stage 3–4 transition is threatened. A potential pattern of communication, reframed as dialogue, is supported by Canon Law (228.2 and 212.3).

> Lay people who are outstanding in the requisite knowledge, prudence and integrity, are capable of being experts or advisors, even in councils in accordance with the law, in order to provide assistance to the Pastors of the Church (The Canon Law Society Trust 1983, 37).
>
> They have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ's faithful ... (35).

The second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* describes the Church as the "People of God," implying that the Church "is not exclusively identified with its institutional structures or the hierarchy, but is seen as **being first** (my emphasis) a community, a people, inclusive of clerical leaders and laity" (Wood 2000, 12). If the Church is not primarily aligned with, or understood as, the hierarchy but is rather identified with the baptised and anointed community (including lay, ordained and religious), the context and medium for communication, dialogue, and theological reflection is the very life of the community itself. As in the case of *Lumen Gentium* (n. 37), the question arises as to what dynamics of power and communicative exchanges will be expressed as lay people make their contribution. Susan Wood makes a valid critique that is applicable to *The Sign We Give* and also resonates with the experience of those involved in the Aspendale project. The inherent ambiguity of Church documents such as Lumen Gentium can assist exploitation by those in power or develop possibilities for creativity and evolution. Significantly, this chapter in *Lumen Gentium* directly follows the chapter on the mystery of the Church and **precedes** the chapters on the hierarchy and the laity thereby setting the context and tone.

[58] *Sign.* Part II: The Role of the Priest.

This location indicates the

> prior unity of all the faithful within the one People of God, on the basis of their baptism before they are identified in their diversity. The importance of its position cannot be overestimated. The Church cannot be identified with the hierarchy ... (Wood 2000, 12)

Once again Wood's commentary resonates with the Aspendale experience and the apparent impossibility of engaging those in authority. Similarly it is disappointing to note that *The Sign We Give* neither addresses nor engages the dynamics of this interaction but reflects the limited dialogue and consultation between priests and laity which becomes the primary framework of the document itself. Acting as the voice of this part of the People of God, the document stops short of taking reflection on experience and practice into dialogue and deeper theological reflection with the Magisterium and Scripture, or even, as the American bishops did, suggesting changes in the ordination liturgy. In the practice of consultation, it seems that the People of God collude in reversing the priority of *Lumen Gentium* to the point where the will, sense of community and joint experience of mission of the Church are in passive and ineffective communication with the hierarchy as expressed through the Magisterium.

It does not have to be so ...

Costelloe uses theological reflection to discern, question and probe the ambiguities that create valuable space for dialogue in John Paul II's theology of ordained ministry. One small sample of *Christifideles Laici* illustrates the reflective potential of engaging at all levels by outlining the work of the Holy Spirit who "lavishes diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts on all the baptised" (n. 21). Costelloe affirms and cites this diversity and inter-relatedness.

> In a primary position in the church are the *ordained ministries*, that is, the ministries *that come from the Sacrament of Orders* ... The ordained ministries, apart from the persons who receive them, are a grace for the entire Church ... and [have] the royal priesthood of all the faithful as its aim and [are] ordered to it (n. 22) ... the Church's mission of salvation in the world is realised not only by the ministers in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders but also by all the lay faithful (n. 23).

Costelloe points out that both a *diversity* and a *hierarchy* of gifts is described here, suggesting that those ordained hold the primary position in the Church, with the lay faithful presumably occupying the secondary position or even the third position after the consecrated religious. He asks how this concept of primacy "reconcile[s] with that vision of the Church which would see the ordained ministry at the *service* of the royal priesthood of the faithful which is the Church's fundamental sharing in the priesthood of Christ" (1998, 331). Costelloe probes these ambiguities throughout his thesis and argues convincingly, not to undermine the authority of Church teaching but to create dialogical opportunities that can enhance and clarify. His concept of Christ **and** the community as bearer of mystery and doctor of the soul provides a helpful lens.

One goal of theological education is to form ministers who develop their spirituality and ministerial competence "to serve the people ... [and] to orchestrate the gifts and talents of others in service to the community and mission of the Church" (Murnion 2000, 20). Costelloe concludes that no one group in the Church holds a primary position, but the Church as a whole serves mission from that place.

> The "primary place," then, belongs to every Christian as a member of the priestly people, sharing in the common priesthood of the faithful and making his or her contribution, according to the gifts bestowed, to the exercise of that existential priesthood (1998, 332).
>
> This is why John Paul, when he spoke about the ordained minister as an *alter Christus* (which he did, in fact, quite rarely), did not wish to suggest that only bishops and priests can represent Christ in the Church or in the wider world. On the contrary, it is our belonging to the Church through our baptism that enables us, together, to be an *alter Christus*, to be the ongoing presence of Christ in the human story (2005, 9).

For Kilmartin the ministry of priests belongs to the structures of the Church, because Christ, through the Spirit, gives these structures to the Church. Acting *in persona Christi* denotes that "the ordained are not delegates of the community [and] that their ministry derives from Christ and is supported actively by Christ and the Spirit (1977, 553). However, as Donovan points out, the "language is misused when it gives the impression that ministers automatically represent Christ in their ministry or when it is used juridically to justify certain kinds of ecclesiastical obedience" (1992, 131). Kilmartin's

concluding comment affirms that dialogue can accurately reflect a mutuality of power and respect.

> ... because it is a matter of faith in Christ not in the office-bearer, the community has the responsibility to test the minister ... This point of view harmonises with one of the theologies of ordained ministry found in the documents of Vatican II (1977, 553–554).

O'Leary's conclusion is concerned not only with the content of the document but with the lack of dialogical guidance and determination on the part of those in leadership positions. He speaks for two of Fuellenbach's sources who are not being listened to - those involved in the ongoing life of the worshiping community and those committed to the mission of the Church. O'Leary has already argued the case on behalf of the "second class citizens" who fear "another desperate patching-up job on the part of the clerical institution," the "many who carry seething resentment," and the "huge and trusting majority who try to be obedient ... and wait for guidance" (1995, 556).[59]

> Some of these are issues of nerve. Too many are fiddling while Rome is burning. Jesus and Peter and Paul challenged each other and the orthodoxy of their time. We are all so afraid of conflict ... We need guidance from those who can read the signs ... and we need lots of courage to move out into new roles and responsibilities. There is a harvest of divine energy in the people we meet every day waiting to be recognised and released (560).

One of the tasks is therefore to clarify how various parts of a tradition made up of Scripture and conciliar decrees have influenced experience and practice. In the process the Church will *recover* God's involvement in the tradition and *overcome* "our repeated misapprehensions of these gifts" (Whitehead 1987, 37). Corporate reflection in documents such as *The Sign We Give*, is intended to help the People of God to define and confess their shared life of faith because "we not only hold onto past truths; we re-imagine them" (53). The "harvest of divine energy ... waiting to be recognised and

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[59] I hear echoes of Anne McMillan's *Statement of Concern* from rural Victoria as the Church moved into the third millennium. She is concerned for the continued existence of faith communities with fifteen years experience of the absence of an ordained minister, and she is challenged by Gabe Huck's (2001) question as to where *Sunday Mass Five Years from Now* will be. McMillan concludes that "laity will need to be empowered to preach the Word, prepare and lead Sunday liturgical prayer, celebrate the funeral rites of the Church, baptise new members of the Church, and minister to the sick and housebound ... formation and education in all aspects of liturgical leadership and practice is crucial to ensure authentic liturgical experiences ..." (2001, 17).

released" is precisely the fourth and implicit source of theological reflection, the Holy Spirit, in this instance working in and through the *sensus fidelium.*

> The challenge is to develop means of critical access to this sense of the faithful - specific, practical means which rescue this category of *sensus fidelium* from its current rhetorical status and bring its religious information into the processes of pastoral decision-making (Whitehead and Whitehead 1980, 19).

5.1.1.1 A Concluding Historical Window

If, fifteen years after the Whiteheads' challenge, O'Leary is lamenting the continuing "rhetorical status" for laity, what of the dialogue between the bishops who commissioned the document and other bishops who also seek to represent and enact the Tradition and the Magisterium? *The Sign We Give* appeared in 1995, two years before *On Certain Questions* appeared in November 1997. The same bishops of England and Wales who stood behind the document went to Rome for a five yearly *ad limina* visit in October 1997. Three facts stand out.

- *The Tablet* of November 1 1997 notes that the "the bishops were perplexed to learn ... that a document was being prepared on lay ministry without their knowledge" (1413). There had obviously been a process of selective and confidential consultation but it is nevertheless surprising that none of these bishops had even been consulted.
- Several weeks later the bishops would finally see the document and a defensive statement from Bishop Nichols is reported in *The Tablet* of November 22. "We were not consulted. They (the abuses and problems) do not exist here. And that is a very important point to recall."[60] Unfortunately this defensive comment reveals the perception that such an important document is experienced as having only a chastising or punitive focus where the spirit was not one of encouragement or invitation to continuing dialogue. Bishop Nichols appears relieved not to have been

[60] In the later discussion of *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions*, I argue that the Instruction illustrates a severe failure in communication and dialogue not only with laity and priests but with bishops themselves (Stecher 1997; Brundell 1998, 26–30; Cozzens 2000, 8–9, 138–139).

consulted because at least this meant they were not 'in trouble'. This perception is picked up and reported by others (Stecher 1997; Brundell 1998).[61]

- The same edition of *The Tablet* quotes the speeches of the bishops and the Pope's response. During the *ad limina* visit the Pope affirms the work of *The Sign We Give* and the commitment to strengthen collaborative ministry. He also affirms the need for "theological and practical clarity regarding what is specific to the ministerial priesthood" (1421). This was just before the delivery of an Instruction that affirmed the "continued presence" of the monarchical Church (Wood 2000, 23–24). He then asks a rhetorical question in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that appears to ignore the desperate search for solutions. "Is it not true that the more the laity's own sense of vocation is deepened, the more they recognise the priest's sacramental consecration, and his specific role in promoting the baptismal priesthood of the entire people of God, leading it to its full ecclesial realisation" (n. 17)? When one's "sense of vocation" is deepening ***in the absence of priests*** and as the Church wrestles with a negative perception of the document, this has a hollow sound. Brundell comments that it "is difficult to believe that the widespread negativity that greeted this Instruction was entirely a symptom of poor spirit in the Church" (1998, 30).

To tired priests, their silent bishops and anxious, hard-working laity, all the work that had been done, albeit incomplete, was not considered or listened to by those at the upper levels of decision-making. Can theological and practical clarity on collaborative ministry be achieved if there is no context for dialogue and theological reflection between **all** the Church's ministers? The Pope's direct response to the English and Welsh bishops also declared that formation and training of priests and laity must be undertaken separately. This direction appeared in the Instruction (Article 13), where it was noted that formation courses would be available for laity "in environments other than that of the Seminary, as this is reserved solely for those preparing for the priesthood." Christian ministers, lay and ordained, learn and grow in community as Scripture is explored, hermeneutics developed and as theological reflection becomes an

[61] For Brundell the interpretation of the mood and content of the document was further confused by post-publication attempts at clarification such as those by the bishops of England and Wales. They believed the Instruction did not concern them because they claimed that this is what Rome had said during their visit. In fact some of the prohibited practices were known to be current, in Britain. In addition to the confusion

essential skill for healthy, sustainable ministry. As the vocations of ordained and non-ordained blossom and grow, I would argue that "theological and practical clarity" can develop side by side as each one observes, studies, reflects and responds.

Murnion argues persuasively that "[a]ny narrowness of vision, discomfort with diversity, or inability to relate comfortably to adult women and men will simply not do" (2000, 18). This can be enhanced by companionship at significant learning stages on the journey of formation, and the American bishops in the following document explore a concept of vocational mutuality that enables and empowers the formation of priests and laity.

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as to the 'targets' and anger at the "restricting rather than facilitating" tone, "the bishops have virtually been required to become enforcers of rules that they had no hand in formulating" (1998, 30).

5.1.2 *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions (1995–1999)*

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in the United States had commissioned previous studies on the expanding role of the laity, one in 1992,[62] and a second one in 1995.[63] In the latter study the final report, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* used the category "lay ecclesial minsters" to identify all laypersons using their gifts and talents in authorised service of the Church. In *The State of the Questions* three goals express a serious commitment to lay ministry development that exemplifies the priorities and top-down leadership support necessary for stage 3–4 transition.

- Research and integrate in practice a deeper understanding of the "phenomenon" of lay ecclesial ministry that could "sharpen" leadership abilities for bishops and diocesan personnel. Significantly for stage 3-4 transition, anticipated areas of policy development would be formation and education, placement, evaluation, accountability, credentialing certification, ministerial collaboration, and theological and canonical considerations.
- "Stimulate conversation and collaboration" more effectively at all levels within the Church and thus ensure "high quality pastoral ministry" and "the distinct place of professionally prepared ministers in this context."
- Develop a long-range plan for this ministry that the bishops could support and enact.[64]

The structure and focus of the document built on the two earlier studies,[65] with a balanced representation in membership and groups surveyed.[66] The bishops affirmed the

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[62] This study measured and described the extent to which laity were being entrusted with parish leadership roles (Murnion 1992). 21,500 lay persons worked full or part-time in parish positions. A follow-up study (Murnion and DeLambo 1999) estimated an increase of thirty-five percent in the numbers of positions to 29,145. Sixty percent of U.S. parishes employed lay ministers.

[63] The NCCB issued *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (*Called*) in order to " expand our study and dialogue concerning lay ministry ... The new evangelisation will become a reality only if ordained and lay members of Christ's faithful understand their roles and ministries as complementary ... " (1995, 18). The bishops were responding to the qualitative and factual reality that lay ecclesial ministers "speak of their work, their service, as a calling, not merely a job. They believe God has called them to their ministry, and often the parish priest is the means of discerning the call" (17).

[64] *Called.* Introduction. Background.

[65] *Called.* Introduction. Background. The document takes the form of Themes and Conclusions.
The themes are: (i) The Term "Lay Ecclesial Minister"; (ii) Toward A Theology Of Lay Ecclesial Ministry; (iii) Preparation For Lay Ecclesial Ministers; (iv) The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers; (v) Financial And Human Resource Issues; (vi) Multicultural Issues.

[66] *Called.* Introduction. Leadership for the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Project.
The research group was responsible to the Committee on the Laity. This included bishops, theologians, canonists, priests, deacons, lay ministers, educators, parish and diocesan staff, Latin American and

value of mutual, rather than separated discernment of vocation. The call of the priest is discerned and affirmed as he ministers and those who receive ministry are part of this dynamic process and emerging vocational journey. Ongoing discernment of this vocation is a reciprocal process and both expressions of ministry are needed in their "full dignity and strength".[67]

> To speak of a genuine collaboration of ordained ministers and lay ecclesial ministers diminishes neither the sacramental character of ordination nor the properly secular character of the laity, but rather enriches both.[68]

This formational criterion must be tested and confirmed to enable transition to stage four. Donna Hanson addressed Pope John Paul II on behalf of the American Catholic Laity in San Francisco 1987.[69] She wrote a moving and passionate personal letter on the topic of lay ministry to her son who was preparing to be ordained. She stated that "only in the daily encounters with women and men can the heart dimension of our spiritual being continue to unfold and grow" (1992, 198–199), and recommended that, "every priest make a preferential option for lay people" (202). Does this only happen in the course of ministry or must it also develop through the process of formation in the seminary? Is it realistic to assume that it is an aspect of grace only imparted at ordination? The bishops suggested the removal of any remaining or simplistic belief that the development of lay ministry is "an emergency response" to the shortage of priests.[70] Murnion is quoted in support of one of the essential factors in clergy formation. He follows the line of the bishops and calls for ordained ministers "to acknowledge and to promote ... the service of lay ecclesial ministers in the Church and in the world."[71]

> Are we sure that the ordained have a strong sense of the baptismal charism of the laity, their responsibility for their own conscience, their gifts for the Church, and

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Canadian Episcopal representatives and various ethnic and cultural communities. Those surveyed included individual bishops, diocesan staff, members of graduate programs and lay ministry associations. There was a follow-up survey of five focus groups of bishops.

[67] *Called.* Lay Ecclesial Minister. Conclusion 13.

[68] *Called.* Lay Ecclesial Minister. Conclusion 16.

[69] Hanson has been described as one of the most prominent Catholic lay persons whose life and work are seen as a voice of the U.S. laity (Goergen1992, 205). She illustrates sources two and three of Fuellenbach's model of theological reflection and her voice is amplified by the support of the U.S. bishops in this section of the report.

[70] *Called.* Lay Ecclesial Minister. Conclusion 13.

[71] *Called.* Lay Ecclesial Minister. Conclusion 14.

> their responsibility for helping to shape and carry out the mission of the Church in the world? ((2000, 21).

Peter Coughlan's commentary on Christifideles Laici (n. 61; n. 62) identifies the location of lay formation.

> The lay faithful are formed *by the Church and in the Church* in a mutual communion and collaboration of all her members - clergy, religious and laity ... The formation of priests and religious must prepare them so that they are ready to foster the vocation and mission of the lay faithful and vice versa (1989, 170).

This reflects the spirit of the document and provides a helpful response to the tension between the conflicting needs of priests and lay ministers for ongoing formation in identity, spiritual development and ministry practice.[72] Resolution of this tension is one of the pivotal factors in stage 3–4 transition. Sofield and Juliano placed a high Stage Three value upon shared programs where, until several years before, most of the continuing education programs for clergy were restricted to clergy.

> Today more dioceses ... open many of their programs to laity and non-ordained religious. In our experience, the sessions that combine clergy, laity and religious are the most stimulating and successful ones. When the opportunities for dialogue are available, many fantasies and stereotypes which interfere with meaningful collaboration are dispelled (1987, 134).

Twenty years later Driscoll's research on rural Victorian priests recommended the need for a continuing balance between what he termed formation of the:

- "presbyterate self" - peer identity and skill development;
- "clergy life and ministry self" - spiritual, educational and ethical standards development;
- "pastoral ministry self" - pro-active models of collaborative leadership (2005, 114–116).

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[72] Euart's discussion of the canonical and practical aspects of this issue suggests that resolution of the tension can be found in clear lines of authority between the bishop and the appointment. "Some time after the bishop makes a formal assignment, usually listing the pastoral co-ordinator along with clergy appointments, he will often formally install the pastoral co-ordinator. In this way, he clearly indicates the authority and recognition of the position" (1995, 9).

All three areas are meant to be interdependent and designed to be a normal point of formational discussion in supervision. Fields of activity and reflection overlap quite naturally and supervision enables the student, priest or lay minister to understand the boundaries of each role. Issues of identity and dual relationships inevitably emerge and in turn, become themes for further reflection. If one of these areas is not developed in conjunction with the other two then there is the danger of either a collapse of boundary definition or a retreat into one of the domains.

Pastores Dabo Vobis states that "the ordained ministry has a radical communitarian form and can only be carried out as a collective work" (n. 35). Archbishop Oscar Lipscombe addresses the issue of the oneness of his priesthood with the bishop and with the priesthood of Jesus Christ. He reminds priests that ordination is not a license to enter private practice and suggests that "we need to raise the level of dialogue in our [priests] councils and deepen the reflection on the ministry of the priest and the mission of the local Church" (1998, 74). Each priest

> has to fashion for himself a way of life in which the personal and presbyteral dimensions are in proper balance, in which the proper emphases or priorities for ministry are determined by himself and in which the supports for ministry are up to the individual (73).

Lipscombe therefore agrees with two of Driscoll's three formational areas. I would argue that the third dimension of lay/ordained is required (not at the expense of the other two but for a rounded wholeness) and needs to be expressed in dialogue with one's lay partners in collaborative ministry. John Hill warns of an administrative and bureaucratic culture that can turn priests into employees of bishops rather than co-ministers (2005, 152). Priestly identity is further challenged when there are fewer priests in the front line of ministry in the parishes. "While in the past, priests have been in both the staff and the line, the balance now is towards priests in the line and expert laity and religious in the staff" (152–153). The healthiest pattern for the priest in the middle is to relate formationally and structurally both ways. In fact this linking role for the priest is critical to the balanced working of the diocese. Costelloe suggests that true priesthood, and the essence of vocation, is built on an inner attitude of self-giving service revealed in a life lived for others. Following John Paul II, he adds that this is the nature of a baptismal

priesthood, and of a vocation "to offer spiritual sacrifices in union with the one redeeming sacrifice offered by Christ himself" (2005, 8).[73] Therefore

> this is not a second-class priesthood lacking in some kind of essential dignity which only the ordained ministry enjoys. On the contrary it is the **fundamental and foundational sharing** (my emphasis) in Christ's priesthood, for the service of which the ordained ministry exists (8).

By providing a culture where "opportunities for dialogue" are seen as a form of best practice, the American bishops sought to avoid an alternative scenario characterised by distance from other ministry partners and suspicion of those in different roles. By being in formation with **all** partners in ministry the priest (and the lay ecclesial minister) can avoid being separated from their true identity. At an institutional level the document foreshadows a new culture for both laity and priests. This new pattern of relationships resembles Kegan's description of a culture that:

- nurtures a capacity for independence and self-definition;
- encourages the taking up of authority;
- promotes the exercise of personal enhancement, ambition or achievement;
- still perceives ministry as a vocation rather than a career or a job (1982, 118–120).

As England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales prepared for the 1987 Synod on the vocation and ministry of the laity, Irish laywoman Ben Kimmerling asked: "Who speaks for the laity in a Church where it is common practice for celibates to speak for the married, for men to speak for women, for bishops to speak for the laity" (1985, 547). The call to be available to one another in the reflective journey of formation provides a place of authentic encounter and dialogue that is

> a call to understanding, a call to respect, a call to a recognition of the basic equality of all Christians. It means that leaders who listen must be free enough, unthreatened enough, and confident enough in their God, to let the whole story pour out ... (556).

In what better context could this dialogue emerge than when study of Scripture, the teaching of the Church, the ongoing life of the worshiping community, and the life

[73] Costelloe cites the *Holy Thursday Letter* of John Paul II (1989, par. 1).

situation of the committed faithful combine in formation stories? Fuellenbach locates the work of the fourth source, the Holy Spirit, in this process.

> It means insisting that the divine dimension is the deepest dimension of the *one* human reality. It means that the process of humanisation is drawn into the eternal framework beyond the limits of the purely temporal. We need the theological data to be able to discover the deepest dimension of human reality (2002, 107).

This criterion for the activity of the Holy Spirit reflects the document's significant focus on mutuality of vocation and discernment of call. The bishops recommended to lay leaders that their "call or vocation is worthy of respect and sustained attention" and should attract "the very best resources for training and formation."[74] Given the shortage of resources and funding this implies a strong commitment to the partnership between ordained and non-ordained in ongoing formation. This commitment must be delivered if progress into stage four of collaborative ministry is to be sustained. In conclusion,

> the contemporary lived experiences of lay ecclesial ministry highlights the fact that any discussion of the role of the laity in the life of the Church has to balance fidelity to the Scripture and Tradition with the charismatic activity of the Spirit. Such discussion must, at the same time, be bold and faithful.[75]

As in *The Sign We Give*, communion ecclesiology and the role of the lay ecclesial minister are affirmed because all the baptised share in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office.[76] The definition of *lay ecclesial minister* includes the essential criteria such as baptism and confirmation, call and giftedness, formation, community support and authorised accreditation. The criterion of "community support" echoes Lobinger's concept of *viri probati* (1998; 2000) where a person (or group of persons) who has lived, worked and ministered within a community is selected as an ordination candidate who will continue to minister within that community. The complementary emphasis on the commissioning role of the bishop advocates healthy partnerships with local parishes. If the bishop approves and the local community (which is familiar with the leader) also approves then this double-affirmation brings confidence. This may not be the case when a priest from outside is appointed rather than an indigenous, home-grown leader. It is deemed important that the "office has been conferred by competent ecclesiastical

[74] *Called.* Preparation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers. Conclusion 5.
[75] *Called.* The Experience of Lay Ecclesial Ministry. Conclusion 27.

authority" and the person must have been "installed in a ministry through the authority of the bishop or his representative, perhaps using a public ritual."[77] This was an issue of authority later discussed in depth by the report. Unlike the British document there is a clearly stated separation and clarification of the identity of lay and ordained. The ministry of the people has its own boundaries and "is appropriate in its own right and should not be seen as a way of participating in the ministry of the ordained."[78] As already noted, the separation is also focused through the emphasis on official recognition because lay leaders "can be distinguished ... by reason of a call to service ... and by an act of authorising and sending by the proper ecclesiastical authority."[79] It is important to note that the Pastoral Leader at Aspendale was under a contract that fulfilled all these criteria and the Archbishop of Melbourne led the commissioning ritual.[80] In the year that the American consultation began, Euart's study on canon 517 had provided guidelines foreshadowing the history of tension behind these emphases, a tension responded to in the practical and formational detail outlined in the report. Pastoral responsibility to lay and ordained was a priority.

> Fears of competition between clerical and non-clerical personnel, as well as charges of clericalisation of the laity, can be avoided or minimised by means of carefully ordered role descriptions ... procedures and processes for protecting the rights of all involved should be spelt out (1995, 9).

The Instruction of 1997, located chronologically at the mid-point of research for this document, sought to affirm the role of laity after Vatican II and in the context of the dilemmas caused by the shortage of priests. Brundell was more a critic of the method of delivery and mode of communication than the content. He affirmed that the Instruction highlighted "the essential difference between the roles of lay persons and priests" and also sought to "safeguard their reciprocity by reasserting

> certain principles touching on the nature of the priestly vocation ... , on the facts that the Church lives by the gift of the sacrament of Orders and that the ordained ministry is integral to the structure of the Church itself (1998, 28).

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[76] *Called.* Toward A Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry. Conclusion 2.
[77] *Called.* The Term Lay Ecclesial Minister. Conclusion 2.
[78] *Called.* Toward A Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry. Conclusion 5.
[79] *Called.* Toward A Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry. Conclusion 8.

This is not in dispute in the document under study. The relationship of the lay ecclesial minister to the bishop was also seen as crucial and worthy of further exploration. Due to the development of some parochial, almost congregational, views of ministry, the document noted that

> there is widespread concern about the current use of the word "commissioning" to signify the completion of a program of study and supervised experiences, instead of its proper use to signify the beginning of an appointment to a specific ministry assignment.[81]

The affirmation of the role and identity of lay people and priests is problematic if one is defined over against the other and once again, the two-tiered system will emerge. In 1994 John Paul II addressed Vatican officials and other leaders at a Symposium on the participation of the laity in priestly ministry. The Pope warned against manipulating the Code of Canon Law to develop new ministries that could be considered as "ordinary and normal solutions that were meant for extraordinary situations".[82] Unfortunately what used to be extraordinary was now becoming ordinary and post -1997 there was still the need for the American bishops to respond to local pressure in spite of the difficult tenor and impact of the Instruction. The conclusion to the section on the relationship between priests and lay ecclesial leaders suggests a bold step that illustrates Kinast's move from interpretation to enacting the learning. Clergy, religious and lay who

> serve together within one diocese, church institution or national office constitute in those settings a **single ministerial body**. (My emphasis). Each group has challenges and needs specific to its state in life and ministry focus. We support the development of comprehensive, integrated personnel systems. Comprehensiveness does not seek to apply the same policy to all groups, but rather to create consistent policies coming from the same basic philosophical stance which takes into consideration the needs of all three groups, and, indeed, the interests of the entire Church.[83]

The document consistently uses "ordained' instead of "priest" and the practical line of demarcation between the ordained and the non-ordained is drawn by lists of what

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[80] The contract was signed by the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor and the Pastoral Leader, both in submission to the Archbishop. 24th January 1996.
[81] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Theological Dimensions.
[82] April 1994. Address to Symposium sponsored by the Congregation for the Clergy.
[83] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Ordained Ministers. Conclusion 6. This came from research by the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators (1994, 10).

the latter are unable to do. The boundary is also drawn and articulated by "the titles, rituals, and canonical and liturgical forms used for the installation of all ecclesial ministers."[84] These processes serve to define rather than confuse and the document moves towards presenting an inclusive, wholistic view of the entire priesthood of God. The identity of the lay ecclesial minister is therefore contrasted to that of the ordained but is included in the issue of all ministers' rights to theological education and formation. The implications of canons 224–231, (The Obligations and Rights of the Lay Christian Faithful) are taken seriously. The document quotes from Murnion and DeLambo, who endorse a strong commitment to improving and accelerating formational resources for lay ecclesial ministers.

> It appears that the practice of pastoral ministry that led to engaging more and more lay-people in parish ministry outstrips the theology and church policy regarding lay ministry. This is to be expected. In fact, it is beneficial that the practice has a chance to develop before it is codified too tightly. Nonetheless, the need to continue theological reflection, ministerial clarification, and church policy development is evident if we are to make the most of the gifts to the Church represented by these parish ministers and provide the kind of support for them and their pastors to foster appropriate and effective collaboration (1999, 74).[85]

They also normalise ("This is to be expected") the inherent difficulties of stage 3–4 transition. This emphasis on the "need to continue theological reflection" as the Church adjusts to change and transition is found throughout the document.[86] A standard based upon a fourfold template was set out for the preparation of lay ecclesial ministers:

- spiritual formation;[87]
- theological education;
- ministerial skill development through supervised field experience;
- contextualised or specialised knowledge/skill mix.

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[84] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Conclusion 2.
[85] *Called.* Introduction.
[86] *Called.* Toward a Theology of Lay Ecclesial Ministry. C. This section reports that forty-six bishops, priests, religious, lay men and women joined in a colloquium in 1998 and expressed "a strong desire for continued theological reflection" on the issue of collaborative ministry.
[87] This incorporated group theological reflection, individual and group spiritual direction, retreats, mentors and program directors, community prayer and faith sharing. This represents a rich and diverse formation track for lay ministers.

American dioceses employed this template for a body of students that had almost tripled over 12 years.[88] They offered four styles of formation:

- A multi-year course with certificates;
- Formation programs affiliated with a College, University or Seminary;
- Academic programs with some formation;
- Non-degree programs sponsored by independent Catholic organisations.[89]

This report therefore articulated and identified a strong practical and ideological commitment to the theological education and formation of lay ecclesial ministers. There is a cautionary note that refers to the anxiety expressed previously in the Instruction regarding the role and identity of the ordained.

> A concern exists on the part of some that giving attention to lay ecclesial ministry will detract from attention to encouraging vocations to the ordained priesthood. We believe this concern should be acknowledged and addressed in a way that honours the essential role of the ordained priesthood and the complementary roles of lay ecclesial ministers.[90]

This sentiment also appears in the discussion of training and formation in a context of shrinking resources where duplication places pressure upon funding sources. Although there were concerns about the impact on priestly identity there was a desire to take seriously the "challenges of educating seminarians and lay ministry students together - desirable as a preparation for the practice of collaborative ministry."[91]

Not everyone in the United States had been concerned about this tension. Thomas O'Meara's response to the Instruction, (cited in Cozzens 2000, 9), offered a challenging reframe of the dilemma that reflects the response of the American bishops. "We've had this new model (of lay ministry) for 25 years. The pastor is not threatened

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[88] In 1986, following the introduction of the new Code of Canon Law (1983) there were 124 diocesan and 82 academic programs with 10,500 students. By 1998, 183 diocesan programs (11 within a Seminary) and 96 University programs had a total of 29,137 students. The lay ministry explosion just prior to this period is described by Bausch (1982, 11–75), and Doohan (1984: 1–61; 1986: 1–23). Dennis Geaney provides a helpful introduction to the training and formation issues for lay ministers in the early 80s (1980).

[89] *Called.* Preparation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers. Subcommittee Findings, A.

[90] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Conclusion 5.

[91] *Called.* Preparation of Lay Ecclesial Ministers. Subcommittee Findings.

or diminished - in a way he's enhanced, he has a more challenging job."[92] Cozzens reinterprets this archetypal dyad of priest and parishioner where the traditional, hierarchical links begin to break down to form more mutual relationships. "While ordained for priestly ministry, the priest remains a member of the faithful in need of ministry and community." Cozzens often saw this dialectic dissolve into mutuality as the priest who blesses, "bows his head to receive the blessing of others" (2000, 12). The task of affirming this mutuality while still respecting and exploring roles is part of adult life and ministry in all traditions. It is not a problem or a dilemma per se, it is a predictable maturational phase that presents the challenge as to where both lay and ordained can grow and mature.[93] It is now standard practice for ministry candidates and lay ministers in my own tradition to be exposed to teaching, case study methodology and reflective practice in the area of boundaries, role definition and the maintenance and understanding of dual relationships and vocational difference.[94]

There is an interesting anomaly in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. The report uses data from the Parish and Parish Minister's research to indicate that administrative relationships between lay ecclesial ministers and diocesan structures are "fine in all but 10 to 15 percent of the parishes" (Murnion and DeLambo 1999, 55). However interpretations of working relationships between ordained pastors and non-ordained lay ministers were less positive with 58 percent of pastors, as opposed to 31 percent of non-

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[92] This was at the height of some lively and angry responses to the Instruction. O'Meara's response appeared in the *National Catholic Reporter* of December 5 (1997, 14).

[93] *Called.* Appendix 2. Questions from the Subcommittee. F. The bishops looked for descriptions that clearly affirmed distinctions as well as complementarities between lay ecclesial ministers and the ordained as well as between lay ecclesial ministers and other laity.

[94] A survey of *Seminary Review* over the life of the Aspendale project reveals some illustrative examples. Paul Wadell reframes the necessary (but somewhat clinical) concept of boundaries in dual relationships within the parish. He develops Aristotle's concept of 'virtue friendships' to provide an inspiring and healthy portrayal of *The Role of Friendship in the Moral and Spiritual Development of Seminarians* (1995, 19–29). Murnion challenges new millennium priests to practice evolving models of ministry in partnership with "the tradition of the Church, the views of respected mentors and peers ... "(1996, 23). He advocates a context of mutuality where training and formation are shared. Some were worried that this might diminish the unique identity of priests but Murnion suggests that "the opposite is true: it is lay people with little understanding of sacramental theology who will lack appreciation for the theology of orders and the ministry of the priest" (25). James Bacik borrows A.N. Whitehead's concept of the 'inclusive uniqueness' of the priesthood. "My own sense is that serious Christians today want priests to be not only friends, but also spiritual leaders; not only fellow searchers, but also wise guides; not only participants in secular life, but also shapers of the liturgical world" (1997, 17). Cardinal Godfreed Daneels pinpoints the spiritual/existential tension by carefully delineating the incarnational dimension of spirituality, pastoral ministry and dual relationships. "A priest who loves the Church, but who is not

ordained parish ministers, perceiving the relationship as collaborative rather than independent. There was a similar difference in perception of the working relationship as *team* rather than *staff*.[95]

> ... the relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and ordained ministers was seen both as a theological issue and as one with organisational and interpersonal dimensions ... How do we convince our people (perhaps priests) that lay ministry is not second-class ministry but a responsibility flowing from baptism?[96]

This factor becomes a test of the viability of transition from stage three to stage four and should therefore become a priority issue for those in leadership and seminary formation. Subcommittee activities used Murnion's research on the relationship between ordained and lay ministers to provide a similar practical and relational focus. The organisational and collegial aspects that emerge as key priorities are complemented by a commitment to studying the theological aspects of the relationship between lay ecclesial ministers and bishops as well as priests.[97]

5.1.2.1 A concluding dialogical window

A colloquium was convened that considered *On Certain Questions* and a special sub-committee of four bishops focused on this Instruction.[98] Practical suggestions emerged that concentrated on job specifications, salaries, continuing education, grievance processes, portability of pensions, stable employment and diocesan policy.[99] The only item specifically nominated for further work was that of portable pension benefits. It would seem that the Instruction was absorbed, without excessive reaction, as

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spiritually and psychologically attached to the Church and who does not think of the Church as part of his own flesh, is a risk" (1998, 21).

[95] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Theological Dimensions.

[96] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. B. What We Learned From Bishop's Surveys And Focus Groups.

[97] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. 1. Conclusions and Proposals. The previous section (C), also emphasised a request "for improving working relationships between priests and lay ministers by providing better training for both groups." The discussion supports some aspects of a shared formation program.

[98] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. C. What We Learned From Subcommittee Activities.

[99] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Conclusions and Proposal from the Subcommittee.

an exercise of theology and interpretation. The bishops naturally endorsed the teaching of the Magisterium as ONE contributing factor but they also affirmed and utilised Fuellenbach's two other sources of theological reflection, the insights and experiences of the worshiping faithful and their missional life situation. Extensive consultation with priests made the predictable suggestion that clarification of "roles and definitions are desired and needed by all Church ministers."[100] This is precisely the focus of the document, reflecting the fact that Euart's (1995) canonical interpretations and guidelines were still very much part of a developing agenda and priority. It appears that stage 3–4 transition was continuing in a balanced and healthy way and another major emphasis for further work was

> the relationship between the bishop and the lay ecclesial minister and that relationship's theological and practical implications ... the existing practices for installation and commissioning and ... titles and descriptions used throughout the country for lay ministry positions.[101]

Authority and control is thus settled with bishops and even with its appalling communication blunders the Instruction became part of the fine tuning of existing priorities and a sustained commitment to the development of collaborative ministry. This still aligns with Sofield and Juliano's fourth stage - Action. They describe the process when, for example a difficult (in communication and tone) Instruction is issued.

> ... energy is channelled towards making collaborative ministry a reality: Individuals and groups invest time, energy and, in some cases, money to accomplish their goal. They remain committed even when their efforts meet with the inevitable frustration and conflicts (1987, 19).

Cozzens makes an important point in his critique of the Instruction in affirming the importance of the role and identity of the priest in the Church's ministry.

> At the core ... is the search for his unfolding identity as an ordained servant of Jesus Christ. Behind and beyond ... lies the lingering question of his true self as one ordained into the priesthood of the one High priest. As much an existential issue as a theological one, the question takes him beyond the traditional and current theologies of the priesthood (2000, 9).

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[100] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. C. What We Learned From Subcommittee Activities.

[101] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. Conclusions And Proposals From The Subcommittee. Proposals 1 and 2.

The existential aspects are certainly alluded to when the bishops see the relationship as "a theological issue ... with organisational and interpersonal dimensions."[102] However, in deciding not to engage the difficult aspects of the Instruction specifically the bishops leave both priests and lay leaders in a theological and pastoral vacuum. For the local priest, overworked and with no respite in sight, and for the lay ecclesial minister he works alongside in a hopeful, yet still ambiguous, partnership, the Instruction was of little comfort. In failing to engage the difficult dynamics the document omits a critical aspect of reflection. Contingent data from the worshiping community's responses and their experience of the Instruction are not reported or integrated in the conclusions. Simply absorbing the Instruction runs the risk of defaulting on critical theological leadership and reflection and this may leave both parties worse off. 'First order change' that is experienced as denial or simply moving the deckchairs on the Titanic is depressing for those who are working within Sofield and Juliano's third stage and who may only hear the reprimanding voice of the Magisterium. The bishops do not merely implement first order change, they come to a positive stance on progressive developments in collaborative ministry but they do not describe the "workings' behind the conclusions. Brundell outlined the good intentions of the Instruction but notes that

> the document was widely and very publicly judged to have been unhelpful, discouraging ..., too concentrated on abuses, and by-passing yet again the role of local bishops and national bishops conferences (1998, 26).

Do bishops get the Instructions they deserve or do Instructions get the bishops they deserve? With the best will in the world, do key parties collude to maintain homogeneity, retain the status quo or avoid conflict? The strong, passionate and widespread response constitutes *lived experience*, an essential aspect of theological reflection (Kinast 1996, 23–41; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995). "Furore over the Vatican's move to rein in the laity," was the heading in the *Tablet* of 22 November, 1997. In the body of the article, German Catholics talked about a "dark day", an "atmosphere of distrust", and a "slap in the face"(1514). Bishops in England and Wales sought to reassure their people that they were not the targets of this rebuke. "We were

[102] *Called.* The Relationship Between Lay Ecclesial Ministers And Ordained Ministers. B. What We Learned From Bishop's Surveys And Focus Groups.

not consulted. They (the abuses) do not exist here." They went on to suggest that maybe the French were the guilty parties (1517)! Brundell writes that the offending practices were common and well known in the United Kingdom and he notes that Cardinal Ratzinger included Australia, thus leading to people being "seriously confused and frustrated" (1998, 30). Helen Hitchcock cites the Cardinal's fear, expressed in the March 11, 1998 edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, of a "clericalisation of the laity who exercise this pastoral profession [and] make invisible and almost incomprehensible the essential difference between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood."[103] Brundell believes that as an exercise in communication the Instruction was a failure, "in fact, a disaster," prompted by this widespread fear of loss of priestly identity (29). As an example of the lack of collegiality, it led to confusion and counter-claims amongst different groups of bishops. The bishops of England and Wales had made their five yearly *ad limina* visit to Rome from the 15–25 October, just before the Instruction was circulated. *The Tablet* of November 1, 1997 reported that the Pope

> endorsed their moves to encourage collaborative ministry, but the bishops were perplexed to learn in one Vatican congregation that a document on lay ministry was being prepared without their knowledge,

and yet at the conclusion of that same article we find that the British

> Cardinal Hume remarked that they had reached such a degree of common understanding that "anyone can speak on behalf of all" (1413).

This is a strange picture of collegiality. The public face of unity and the private face of submission suggest that dialogue has been subverted by power. Perplexity at the mixed messages, particularly when the content of the Instruction became known, seems like a reasonable response but Cardinal Hume's comment speaks of 'peace-keeping.' The American bishops however were able to consider the implications of the Instruction over a period of time and their measured, local affirmation of both priests and lay ecclesial ministers is balanced, pastoral and supportive. Their silence in the face of the response and experience of their lay people is difficult to explain.

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[103] Hitchcock is writing in the online edition of *Voices*, 13, nos. 1–2 (Winter 1997 – Spring 1998).

5.1.3 *As I Have Done For You: A Pastoral Letter on Ministry (2000)*

This Archdiocesan pastoral letter does not seem like an official document. The genre of communication provides, in contrast to the other documents, a warm pastoral letter that invites reflection, dialogue and conversation. The Archbishop notes that the letter "is itself the fruit of the Priest's Assembly of 1997 and the Convocations of 1998 and 1999."[104] Theological reflection on ministry and priesthood is developed around "portraits of St Leo's 2005," a series of imaginary and descriptive sketches of a possible future reality scripted from research and data. The reader is then invited into a process where Scripture, tradition and teaching from Vatican II blend with ministry scenarios as discussion points.

The style is reminiscent of models of theological reflection contemporary to the Aspendale project (Killen and de Beer 1994; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 2000). The document also uses case studies and scenarios as often used in practical theology (Browning 1991; Wilson et al 1996). Kinast's earlier text (1996) where students are challenged to *Let Ministry Teach* finds many echoes in this document that demonstrates a balanced focus on experience. This is consistent with Van Manen's concept of "researching lived experience" (1990), as expressed in the title of this document which comes from the foot-washing story in St. John's Gospel. After washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus tell them: "As I have done for you, you should do also" (13: 15). This affirms "the conviction that all ministry in the Church, ordained or non-ordained, is rooted in Christ the Servant" and emphasise that collaborative ministry must be based on theological and practical conversation.[105] This Gospel story becomes the scriptural leitmotif that guides the Pastoral Letter. Fuellenbach understands the role of Scripture in theological reflection as a process of making the text "alive so that it can speak to us again as God's word for our time and situation" (2002, 104–105). In a context where empowerment and 'giving a voice' to all parties is an essential aspect of community formation, Fuellenbach's citation of Bernard Lonergan's appeal on behalf of God's voice is important in framing the role of Scripture. Lonergan describes the Bible

[104] *Pastoral Letter*. Conclusion. The Archbishop invites "every priest, deacon, religious and baptised Catholic within the archdiocese" to read the text and engage in theological reflection through the exercises before attending the Synod in the following year.
[105] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 2. On the Road Together.

as "God's claim to have a say in the aims and purposes, the direction and development of human lives, human societies, human culture, human history" (1978, 9). Readers are therefore invited to absorb this Gospel story and take the Pastoral Letter

> as a tool, a mechanism for reshaping the ministerial structures of the local Church in a way that is both more collaborative and more attentive to the diversity of cultures which make up the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. No less will we do if we are to remain faithful to our vocation as a Catholic people ... in our own time and place.[106]

This quotation displays elements of Schreiter's early work on constructing local theologies. He emphasised the need for a pastorally and inclusively validating process where

> the experience of the cultural rootedness of theology rebounds again on a local community when it engages the church tradition, entering into that dialogue to test, affirm, and challenge its own understanding of the gospel (1985, 75).

This document adopts a style that encourages theologising in a concrete way that

> can help to prevent the imposition of the wrong forms and ... free us from thinking that theology as sure knowledge is the sole, legitimate form of 'real' theology ... [107] [This] allows local cultural and religious forms to dialogue more easily with the church tradition, thereby offering a better chance of maintaining a genuine catholicity in a local church's expression of faith (Schreiter 1985, 93–94).

For this reason, "planning at all levels of ecclesial life" is essential and exercises in theological reflection are offered to enable "parish-based groups, pastoral councils and other groups to strategise ways to meet ministerial needs of the Church of tomorrow."[108] A current understanding of practical theology proposes that an essential task of ALL

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[106] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 2. On the Road Together.

[107] A summary of theology as "sure knowledge" can be found in Schreiter (1985, 87–93). A critical, relational account of faith and rigorous analysis of key texts often relied on human reason but now also incorporates the social sciences. Theology as sure knowledge constructs a system to explain the unity of the world. The task of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, was to "establish in what ways religious knowledge is at least equal, if not superior, to other ways of knowing value in the culture" (88). In the nineteenth and twentieth century, 'method' as well as 'content' dominated the discussion hence the need for integrative scholars like Browning who described this as an era of "books dealing explicitly with the reconceptualisation of practical theology" (1991, 36).

[108] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Planning for the Future.

people in Christian or religious vocations is to engage in reflection and interpretation. Although practical theology is a facet of theology in its rigorous, academic mode,

> it is closely linked to the everyday lives and concerns of ordinary people. It is thus participative and democratic, requiring wide involvement from all Christians, not just the attention and concerns of an academic or clerical elite (Woodward and Pattison 2000, 118).

The Pastoral Letter proposes that all Catholics need more than a "mere adjustment and small shifts in practice" and therefore it calls for a "major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice."[109] One of the goals of the reflective exercises to be undertaken throughout the archdiocese was to encourage a grassroots community of practical theologians to explore a "common foundational theology as the basis for the formation of seminarians, deacons, religious and lay persons for ministry."[110]

Parts One to Three introduce contemporary issues in the context of Scripture and teaching from the Magisterium. The reflective exercises and scenarios offer ministry situations and further Scripture readings as prompts for a focus on experience.[111] There are four exercises that implement Kinast's four phases of theological reflection that allow experience to become part of the contingent data (1996). The document moves towards a more egalitarian pattern of reflective expertise and competence as a way of discerning God's will. Edward Farley also sought to avoid the clerical paradigm of practical theology where the discipline was narrowly defined around the pastoral skills of clergy (1983a; 1983b; 1987; 2000).[112] The Los Angeles document exemplifies this approach. Because ministry provides a context for reflection ministry not only "presupposes and needs practical theology in its fundamental sense of a hermeneutic of situations, but [also] moves beyond that to the special requirements of the vocational situation" (Farley 2000, 122).

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[109] *Pastoral Letter*. On the Road Together.
[110] *Pastoral Letter*. On the Road Together.
[111] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Planning for the Future.
[112] For more detailed discussion, see Farley's approach to theological reflection in the context of practical theology (1983a). For a briefer summary of themes that connect community reflective practice to practical theology see his chapter in Woodward and Pattison (2000, 122–126). The basic elements of this inclusive, egalitarian approach appeared much earlier in texts that sought to map the field of practical theology (Browning 1983; Mudge and Poling 1987).

Within this document, practical theology becomes a "Hermeneutic of Vocation" which is designed to permeate the whole faith-community and not just the clerical sub-group that Farley is seeking to make more open. Kathleen Cahalan concludes her evaluation of three approaches to practical theology with a similar point.[113]

> Practical theology can make important contributions to our understanding of ministry without lapsing into the clerical paradigm. Practical theology can begin by attending to how Christians live and ought to live within the peculiar vagaries of time and place (2005, 93).

Part Two of the pastoral letter calls for a "major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice." The title of this section, "On the Road Together" illustrates the collegial and inclusive spirit of the document.[114] Athol Gill suggests that all the faithful should be called to be *hodogetes* of the ongoing experiential journey of biblical reflection and interpretation rather than simply being *exegetes* of the text (1989). As pilgrim people on the way or on the road (Greek: hodos) we interpret the journey and observe Scripture, culture, experience, tradition and the history of interpretation together. It is a dynamic metaphor of journey, companionship and emerging vocation that fits the ethos of this document. The document likens the Church to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13ff). "Like them we are on the road, *in via*, amidst a journey, and, like them, our expectations have been unsettled."[115] However the unsettling developments, attached as they are to the growth in gifts for ministry and expansion of lay ministries, are positively reframed as "signs of God's enduring love and care for the Church, and ... invitations to renewed and deeper faith in the Spirit's guidance."[116] Fuellenbach asks how these sources of reflection can be balanced.

> What should have the priority? Should we take the contingent data as the tools to interpret the theological or vice versa? The answer is simple. There is no either/or. It is in the interaction and confrontation of both the theological and the contingent that we will find who the God of history and the God of salvation really wants to be for us today (2000, 107).

[113] Paul Lakeland describes three philosophical and theological responses to the crisis of modernity as the late modern, the countermodern and the radical postmodern (1997). Cahalan uses this threefold typology to assess trends in practical theology.
[114] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 2. On the Road Together.
[115] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.
[116] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.

We are dependent upon the theological data from Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium in order to explore the many dimensions of human experience and, for balance, the Church recognises "that historical movements and concrete situations have to be seen and discerned as originating from God's entering into the process of history itself" (106). This perspective enables insights such as: "[i]t has taken the shortage of priestly and religious vocations to awaken in us an appreciation of a broadly-based shared ministry."[117] The ability to reframe events and situations after a time of observation, research and theological reflection is supported by the discipline of biblical studies that have "demonstrated how the Bible itself locates God's revelation within human experience, as a practical process of liberation and interpretation" (Mager 2005, 193).

The document faces the dilemma of working out how practice might shape theology when culture or tradition become opponents of a transition that Sofield and Juliano see as essential to ongoing development of collaborative ministry. The dilemma is further complicated if the dominant culture has a functional view of action that Mager describes "as a fabrication process, as a way of pursuing goals and choosing means, with an emphasis on mastery and efficiency" (194), rather than seeing action as a rich source of reflection.[118] The problem is further complicated if those within the diocese, bishops, priests, religious and lay members see themselves as mere functionaries within a managerial system, thus reducing action to measurable performance within a bureaucratic web. John Quinn proposed that "directed autonomy" should be the mode of relationship between dioceses and the Holy See and thus provide an important place for action-reflection to be validated at the local level (1999, 179). Hill affirms the approach where directed autonomy "like subsidiarity, demands that the boss establishes boundaries, and then get[s] out of the way" (2005, 153). This blunt suggestion can be taken a little further than Hill intends. Effective dialogue requires the "boss" to become a

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[117] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.

[118] Mager uses the work of Hannah Arendt (1958) to critique action as fabrication. He explores a relational model of action that is centred on the disclosure of meaning where action is "not centred on the things of the world as much as on the people who inhabit it. Action is *interaction*, through which human beings both *reveal* and *realise* themselves publicly" (196).

partner in an appropriate reflection process once the action had been pursued. However Hill's warning on bureaucratic excesses is appropriate. He cites Jeanette Betz.

> The more our churches and hospitals and universities run like businesses, the less inclined is anybody to pour out their time, heart and sweat to help them continue. Business can't measure the human heart and soul (153).[119]

Using a case study approach, Arbuckle identifies cultural and bureaucratic threats to Christian or Church-based healthcare and suggests a reframing (or refounding) of biblical and missional priorities.

> Refounding is not about incremental change, but the fundamental reorientation of attitudes and structure. It is not about changing what is, which is renewal, but of bringing about what does not yet exist (2000, 196).

This echoes Los Angeles' emphasis on "major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice." Cardinal Joseph Bernardin wrote in *A Sign of Hope: A Pastoral Letter on Healthcare* of October 18, 1995: "While some have concluded that this is the beginning of the end of Catholic healthcare as we have known it, it can be a time of refounding" (16). One could substitute the word priesthood for healthcare and thus catch the spirit of the Los Angeles document as it looks forward to a creative 'refounding' of the thinking and practice of ministry. Ministry for all Christians is seen as flowing naturally from baptism and a major concern at the Priest's Assembly was to "develop a deeper understanding of collaboration between ministries of the ordained and the non-ordained ... on the part of the ordained."[120] The late James Gill, founding editor of *Human Development*, sounded a prophetic note in the Fall edition of 1983, a note so clear it was reprinted in the edition of Summer 2005. He made recommendations to those responsible for "developing seminarians and young men and women religious as future leaders within the Church and its various orders and congregations." In the course of their education,

> these young men and women could be **apprenticed** for a significant period of time to **lay**, (my emphasis) clergy or religious persons who, in their ministry to others, are clearly manifesting leadership qualities, styles and skills (2005, 28).

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[119] January 10, 2003. "Business Trumps Spirit: Heart and Soul is Lost." *National Catholic Reporter*. 39, no. 10, 17.

[120] *A Pastoral Letter*. Part 2. On the Road Together.

The bishops of Los Angeles sketched just such an inclusive, mutual future that endorsed the "requirement to exercise all ministry in a more communal and collaborative fashion" where, for formation purposes, "[p]riestly identity can only be discerned within priestly relationships - with Christ, with the priestly People of God, with the bishop and other priests."[121] This is a carefully seamless and non-hierarchical description of ongoing formation and ministry. It becomes difficult to imagine that a less holistic context of formation, or a seminary context that requires separation, could fulfil the objectives of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

> The priest in the third millennium ... must adapt to every era and circumstance of life ... to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognise the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations (no. 7).

There is a marked emphasis on the use of Scripture instead of, or in addition to, conciliar documents. *Lumen Gentium* supports "the nature of the Church both hierarchical and charismatic" (no. 4), and affirms that "the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful are none the less interrelated" (no. 10).[122] Scripture is also offered as a source of reflection:[123]

- "different kinds of gifts but the same spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4–7);
- "the gifts of the Spirit given in baptism [for] ministry both ordained and non-ordained" (Matthew 3: 13–17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3: 21–22; John 1: 29–34);
- "Christian community is formed in and through the Eucharist" (1 Corinthians 10: 16–17);
- "a priestly community endowed with the flourishing of gifts to sanctify and evangelise the world" (1 Peter 2: 9).

This pattern continues throughout Part Three and study material draws consistently on the stories and images of the New Testament. This biblical foundation

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[121] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.
[122] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.
[123] *Pastoral Letter*. Part Three. A Baptismal Priesthood: An Abundance of Gifts.
Fuellenbach, with Tavard (1992) recognised that Vatican II did not put the Bible, tradition, and the Magisterium on the same level (2000, 105). This document follows *Dei Verbum* where the Magisterium is "not above God's Word, it rather serves the Word" (no. 10).

emphasises that ministry that is "exercised in a stable, public, recognized, and authorised way" identifies, acknowledges and affirms lay ecclesial ministers and is even described as "ministry in the strict and formal sense."[124] Priestly identity is covered in depth and does not suffer in comparison with the emphasis on mutual ministry. Priesthood is for the service of the whole church on behalf of Christ, but as indicated in *Lumen Gentium* "it also is a ministry done with a priestly people" (no. 10). This document is respectful to all parties. The essence of priesthood is seen to lie in teaching, sanctifying, and guiding. The traditional terms of identity (*in persona Christi, in persona Christi capitis,* pastor, priest) all have within them the capacity to explore and articulate the collaborative aspect of the priest's identity. The bishops affirm that today "the priest may be best understood as a *sign of ecclesial communion.* By sacramental ordination, the priest signifies the *unity, apostolicity,* and *catholicity* of the Church, the Body of Christ, the entire People of God - head and members."[125]

The document concludes that even though there are distinctions allied to careful differentiation of roles and responsibilities there must also be an unambiguous recognition of the fundamental equality of all baptised, whether ordained or not. As Gill noted in his suggestion that young men and women could be apprenticed to widely-respected, ordained and non-ordained leaders, one practical way to work towards this is for a "common foundational theology as the basis for the formation of seminarians, deacons, religious and lay persons for ministry."[126] This would surely entail some elements of joint training and formation.

5.1.3.1 A concluding theological window

Part Four offers a series of exercises that implement basic elements of theological reflection as outlined elsewhere in this report (Groome 1980; Killen and de Beer 1994; Whitehead and Whitehead 1995; Kinast 1996).[127] Fuellenbach's four sources have significant roles in each method but the degree of emphasis may be different.

[124] *Pastoral Letter.* Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.
[125] *Pastoral Letter.* Part 3. A Share in the One Priesthood.
[126] *Pastoral Letter.* On the Road Together.

(a) The first exercise. "Seeing and Understanding."

Multiple 'snapshots' or recognisable critical ministry incidents challenge participants to imagine new strategies. This corresponds to Groome's invitation to "shared praxis" (1980; 1991), and follows Kinast's concept of "letting ministry teach" (1996). Kinast's first step in reflection, "How did I get here? Entering an experience" (1996, 42–67), involves a descriptive process followed by exploratory questions that invite the participant to engage their own story. This occurs in the exercises through an "abundance of scenarios that can be captured in snapshots."[128] Participants then develop their own snapshots for reflection.

(b) The second exercise. "Understanding and Judging."

Passages of Scripture from the document are linked to the multiple scenarios that reflect daily experience. The archdiocese has modelled this practice in the Pastoral Letter and now the method is facilitated within the parishes. The Whiteheads used this method in the first edition of *The Emerging Laity* by introducing scenarios as prompts for biblical reflection (1985, 18–34). Biblical images of leadership complemented insights from Schillebeeckx (1981; 1985), Rahner (1983) and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983). A lay reader at the time would have found Rahner's succinct analysis of the same dilemma that appeared in Aspendale. The problematic relationship between the lay pastoral associate and the priest, is the outcome of a lack of clear role definition that is humanly intolerable and theologically wrong.

> But if in practice, despite all sublime theological distinctions, the pastoral assistant in a priestless community exercises all the functions of a priestly community leader (apart from the two sacramental powers), we are faced with a dilemma. *Either* the functions actually undertaken by the pastoral assistant are regarded as by no means specifically priestly ... [and] what is truly priestly about the ministerial priest is reduced to the two sacramental powers reserved to him alone; the priest becomes a purely cultic functionary ... *Or* it is admitted that the functions actually undertaken by the pastoral assistant are at bottom specifically priestly or can be distinguished from priestly functions only by subtle, academic distinctions (1983, 79–80),

[127] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Planning for the Future: Toward a Collaborative, Inclusive Ministry.
[128] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise One: Seeing and Understanding.

The Catholic community has been well prepared, if not well practised, in this methodology and this document aims to ensure that experience, Scripture and theology are used to encourage dialogue, biblical literacy and the reflective theology of laity as they ponder on pastoral dilemmas. This second exercise exemplifies Kinast's next phase, "That reminds me. Theological reflection as illustration" (68–94). A basic question is asked ("does this experience remind you of anything similar in Scripture?), and then both stories are explored together to the point where Scripture 'illustrates' experience. Scripture is given a special place because the recognition of God's presence and purpose in contemporary events cannot be achieved except in relation to the recognition of God's presence and purpose in past events. Theological reflection rests on an "effective network of background influences" that Alfred North Whitehead called "causal efficacy"[129] and such reflection

> should enter experience on the side of creativity and novelty because this is always God's desire. However, the new comes from the old and is only recognised as new when related to the old. This gives the past, and theological formulations from the past, a certain precedence. It also gives illustration, as a contemporary reaffirmation of the past, a certain primacy (93).

'Illustration' thus becomes a link with past memories, experiences and insights that, to use the words of the document's first exercise, can enable participants "to understand the challenges that await you and chart out a strategy for reshaping ministerial structures in more appropriate ways."[130] The document therefore provides an opportunity for hopeful imagining and collaboration, an exercise in religious education. A. N. Whitehead writes that a religious education

> is an education which inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events. Where attainable knowledge could have changed the issues, ignorance has the guilt of vice. And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity (1929, 14).

[129] Following Whitehead, Kinast argues that causal efficacy explains why the concept of illustration is the most familiar and frequent way that experience teaches and enables learning. "It illustrates the larger whole which is actually (causally) connected to it and which largely brings it about (efficacy)" (94). This is why thick description and social analysis are so important. These disciplines reveal the otherwise hidden skeleton of factors (causal efficacy) that influence or produce any given situation.

[130] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise One: Seeing and Understanding.

While this second exercise uses different words to express the task, ("Understanding and Judging"), the goals are to enable participants to have a deeper understanding of how the past brings about the present, and with it, a sense of reverence and hope at the unfolding purposes of God. Whitehead's concept of duty as awareness of "potential control over the course of events" is revealed in the question used with numerous passages of Scripture: "Do our current ministerial structures in the parish, deanery, pastoral region, and the archdiocese help or hinder the view of ministry" expressed in those passages.[131]

(c) The third exercise. "Deciding."

The reader is challenged to determine what needs to be done or what changes should be implemented for collaborative, inclusive ministry to become a stronger reality, that is, continue the transition to Sofield and Juliano's fourth phase. The study directs that the qualities necessary must be prioritised. How? Kinast agrees that theology, the Magisterium and tradition are important. However "they may have to change to accommodate the new events being created in the present" where those who reflect theologically are never more attuned to God than when, with reflective discipline, they let "the meaning of events guide them to the truth and open up the next possibilities for order, creativity and becoming. This is to let the ministry teach at its best and fullest" (1996, 151). The document now follows Kinast's third step: "Now I Begin to See: Theological Reflection as Application". According to Kinast, application is not the same as praxis or the enactment of theological reflection. Application is

> rethinking one's theology from the perspective of a new situation ... Application is adapting one's theology from its customary context of abstract thought to the novel context of a particular situation. This entails the possibility of changing one's theological priorities or emphases (97).

The third exercise therefore invites pre-action reflection that does not so much impose a theology of collaborative ministry upon a situation as "nuance it" (98) with a respect for Scripture and tradition that engages in thought that is sensitive to the special conditions.

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[131] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise Two: Understanding and Judging.

Participants are invited within the context of their parish, "to share the story of the circumstances that brought him or her to recognise the need to change."[132] This descriptive process or social analysis tries to get behind the factual details and seeks to evaluate the sources and structures that prompted the details. There are 'guiding questions' in the exercise that aid application:

> What decisions needed to be made and why?
> What was needed to sustain and strengthen the decision once it was made?
> What were the perceptions, convictions, behaviour that had to be set aside in response to a call to greater collaboration?[133]

The "perceptions" and "convictions" that may have to change or be set aside are dynamic aspects of Kinast's question, "How does theology affect the situation to which it is applied?", and are linked to his next strategic question, "How does the application affect theology" (100)? The fluidity and flexibility of this step in the reflective process is reminiscent of the liminal space in ritual where the person is poised between the moment of separation and the moment of re-incorporation. Rites of passage conduct persons "through a nothingness, a temporary loss of identity in a time that was no time and a place that was nowhere" (Tom Driver 1991, 157). Arnold Van Gennep used the Latin word for threshold (*limen*) to describe this transitional space (1908; 1960). As we have noted elsewhere, Victor Turner built upon these concepts to describe the value and freedom of liminal space as opposed to the fixed nature of society's status system (1969). A liminal space is developed in theological reflection when participants suspend their perceptions and convictions and where theology can affect the situation and the application can affect theology. By using imagination, application and the ritual process (or steps) of theological reflection then the participant is "existing *as if* outside the structures of society, existing in a subjunctive mode of play and pretend, ... neither here nor there" (Driver, 1991, 159).[134] This concept of liminality catches the spirit of theological reflection within this Pastoral Letter, a spirit that also recognises what it takes for stage 3–4 transition. The focus of this exercise is on qualities such as non-defensiveness and openness rather than specific actions. One quality aspired to by this

[132] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise Three: Deciding.
[133] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise Three: Deciding.
[134] Turner explains "subjunctive." "Just as the subjunctive mood of a verb is used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility, rather than stating actual facts, so do liminality and the phenomena of

exercise is "[h]olding in poised spiritual liberty the inevitable tensions that come with change."[135] This "poised spiritual liberty" encapsulates the essence of liminality and the possibility of transition.

(d) The fourth exercise. Acting.

Participants are invited to identify concrete and specific actions (rather than the necessary qualities and values) that flow from what has been seen and understood and to place them within the framework of judgments and decisions that emerged from the first three exercises.[136] Kinast's corresponding step is titled "Now what do I do? Enacting the learning." The document poses this same question. Parishioners are not asked to perform an external analysis of a past event through a scenario that is familiar and recognisable. They participate in the construction of that event "by entering into the event and experiencing it on its own terms" with a view to future action (Kinast 1996, 181).[137] It is never enough to be satisfied with external observation and repetition of a familiar status quo without experiencing the unique meaning of each occasion as experienced from within. This is the value of the liminal moment in theological reflection and Kinast affirms the beauty of such moments.

> ... theological reflection itself may be understood as a work of art. It is a creative interplay with completed events, reworking them to allow more of their internal harmony and truth to emerge ...The end result of theological reflection is not so much an intelligible system of thought as an increasing sense of appreciation for the beauty and uniqueness of events which constitute the actual world (180–181).

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liminality dissolve all factual and common sense systems into their components and 'play' with them" (1986, 25).

[135] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise Three: Deciding.

[136] *Pastoral Letter*. Part 4. Exercise Four: Acting.
"Action" questions are focused on the discernment of lay and ordained vocations. How does the priest best discern charism and vocation in the members of his parish? What steps should be taken to discern, identify and call forth the gifts of the baptised and how can we provide adequate formation? How can seminarians and priests be educated to recognise and develop the gifts of all the baptised? What would a job description of a contemporary priest look like?

[137] Van Manen's research in education, pedagogy and parenting describes the goal of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection. This is relevant to two of the domains where I work, family counselling and theological field education. "Ultimately the project of phenomenological reflection and explication is to effect a more direct contact with the experience as lived. I want to grasp the meaning of teaching, of mothering, of fathering, so that I can live my pedagogic life ... more fully" (1990, 78).

Parishioners' experience greater riches when they become partners with the archdiocese. In his discussion on the role of public theology in the 'market' of academic education, Eberhard Hauschildt proposes that we have an external and an internal theology and both of them are necessary for effective reflection and appropriate action. He argues that internal theology

> draws on insights from immediate experience. It employs a logic which rests on distinctive premises of faith ... this is an experience which argues on the premise of the existence of God and of Jesus being the Son of God. External theology rather looks at the experience of effects and it employs a logic which rests on premises which are shared by society as a whole ... (2005, 299).

This balance of internal and external theology therefore has implications for mission and dialogue with places of mission. If all the faithful are called to ministry, and if theological reflection is an essential element, then the additional focus on Kinast's "actual world" and Hauschildt's "society as a whole" provides an exciting emphasis in this document.

5.2 Conclusion

Appropriately, the final section is left in the hands of all the members of the Archdiocese as they respond to the invitation to use the studies to prepare for the next Synod.[138] This document reflects much of the ethos and many of the priorities of the *Tomorrow's Church* process and assumes an on-going struggle within the liminal space of stage 3–4 transition. This is not a struggle to be avoided but to be embraced. The complex journey continues, and grief will be inevitable but partnership and dialogue are offered as companions on the way.

[138] The six studies in *Sign* (Appendix 2) also offer British and Welsh parishes opportunities for theological reflection. Each study has four movements: (i) Describe and explore; (ii) Listen and reflect; (iii) Act differently; (iv) Pray and celebrate. Scripture, Church teaching, strategic sections of the Report and individual and group experience become the sources of reflection.

Chapter 6

Key Findings and Implications for Practice

6.1 Introduction

Sofield and Juliano's theory of stage 3–4 transition provided the framework that enabled the Aspendale project to blend qualitative case study research with library research. Grounded theory in partnership with theological reflection offers a complementary approach where theory can be inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents since the researcher does not "begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin 1999, 22). Four major findings emerged from the study as theoretical bases for effective 3–4 transition when there is a particular focus on the role of Lay Pastoral Leader. The first three will be discussed together through the lens of the experience of the Aspendale parishioners. The fourth point will become the conclusion of the report. This report has argued and concludes that effective stage 3–4 transition requires four major theoretical bases:[1]

- Key participants in the process of transition require a facility with flexible models of theological reflection and a commitment to complementarity and mutuality in the early formation and ministry practice of priests and lay leaders.
- Strategic and intentional internships for lay pastoral leaders and specific support systems for those who are married are essential.
- A growth-oriented transition requires commitment to training and education in the pastoral application of principles of grief and loss as the Church experiences significant changes in ministry paradigms.
- Effective transition is based on a culture of effective, sustained dialogue.

These four factors were derived from, and are in reciprocal relationship with the *Implications for Practice* that were developed in Chapter Three. They are now highlighted in the next section.

[1] See Chapter Three (Section 3.3) for detailed analysis of data and Chapter Four for extensive discussion.

6.1.1 *Implications for practice*[2]

How is a parish led by a Lay Pastoral Leader sustained through a 3–4 transition? The following summary of the categories and themes that emerged from the Aspendale project reflects not only the quality of ministry offered but also the affirmations and concerns of participants in the study.

A. An observed mutuality between priest and lay leader provides:

- safety and holding for those struggling with ambiguity;
- a place to express a sense of loss or grief in not having a resident priest;
- a place to normalise the tension and anxiety of liminal experiences during a paradigm shift;
- a pastoral presence that witnesses to reconciliation in the midst of alienating change;
- a sense of security and capacity for mission when there may be no corresponding diocesan collegiality.

B. The three-way partnership between priests, lay leader and parish provides a level of mutuality based on a parish-wide collaborative ethos that:

- protects, delineates and enhances the identity of lay and ordained leaders;
- preserves the identity of priests from a functional status when a lack of diocesan support may reduce the profile of priests to a series of visitors with no pastoral identity;
- offers corrective feedback to pastoral leaders whose enthusiasm and skills tend towards a self-sacrificing paradigm that erodes healthy boundaries and self-care;
- models a level of humanity and transparency that is healthy and balanced;
- complements the priest/lay leader mutuality with an ability to accept the paradox and ambiguity of parish community transition.

[2] See Appendix 4 for detailed examples of the method used to derive categories and themes. See Chapters Three and Four for a detailed description and discussion of the themes that emerged. The expanded literature review in Chapter Four (*Locating the Aspendale Story*) validates, confirms and develops the content of these emerging themes.

C. For this model to be effective,[3] the pastoral leader[4] must demonstrate:

- credible authority based on listening skills, consonance of word and deed, a genuine mission focus and practical vision;
- a capacity for theological reflection that appreciates in advance the paradox of being a pastoral leader who cannot be the liturgical leader, and that takes into account his or her experience of frustration;
- the maturity to manage the political and theological tension in order to empathise with those who are grieving the loss of a resident priest.

D. Supervision topics for the pastoral leader should include the following themes:[5]

- Loyalty to the Church's teaching through canon Law and the Magisterium is held in tension with one's identity as a 'ninety percent' priest.[6]
- Self-care should focus on time management, marriage responsibilities and the need to find creatively appropriate support networks given the pioneering nature of this ministry.
- Pastoral support for a married couple needs to be engaged at parish and diocesan level as effective entry into ministry requires an internship of some kind. Single leaders also need appropriate support.
- Theological reflection on vocation and identity is critical because for the lay pastoral leader his or her service is a now also a service of the Church as well as that of an individual Christian.
- It is important to discern what aspects of pastoral care are appropriate to the sense of alienation and role confusion that is part of the stage 3-4 transition.
- Validation of the role of lay pastoral leader must be considered when alienation occurs.

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[3] All of this is predicated on a maturely formed, reflective pastoral leader. The Aspendale leader demonstrated (and parishioners reported) gifts, skills and vulnerability that developed a sense of community and enhanced the identity of visiting priests.

[4] This may also be a leadership team following a *viri* (sic) *probati* model. *Viri* of course means "men". Either gender is assumed in the current discussion.

[5] These supervision topics emerged from the pastoral leader's story and from the experience of parishioners as they observed the pastoral leader exercise his ministry.

[6] The concept of a 'ninety percent priest' was used by participants, not in a pejorative way, to describe the role and identity of the pastoral leader.

6.1.2 *Hypotheses*

Canons 229 and 231.1 prescribe the rights of lay leaders to an environment that encourages theological education and formation for ministry. This requires a process that is inclusive rather than exclusive, focused on complementarity rather than difference and collegial in ethos rather than hierarchical. This is best expressed in flexible models of theological reflection and a commitment to complementarity and mutuality in the early formation and ministry practice of priests and lay leaders. Grounded theory, case study methodology and theological reflection based on library research were used in the Aspendale model to develop thematically organised data that suggest the following hypotheses for testing by future research.

- Joint formation programs for priests and lay leaders encourage continuing theological conversation, discernment and respect for vocational identity and the ability to work collaboratively. When experienced early in ministry formation, mutuality not only models a differentiation of roles it affirms the identity of each person.
- Supervised theological field education for priests, seminarians and lay leaders, in addition to work with formators, should incorporate feedback from parishioners – or those who directly receive the ministry. This will enhance collaborative ministry and enable a more effective stage 3–4 transition. There are many instruments available that can be tested for effectiveness and relevance.
- Internships offered prior to the appointment of lay leaders will empower, provide accountability for, and offer on-going formation to all three ministry partners – priest, lay leader and parishioner.
- Commissioning liturgies for lay appointments validate the role and identity of lay leaders without diminishing the status of priests. They enhance all forms of ministry, promote diversity in vocations and are a sign of God's grace upon the community.
- The Aspendale model has flaws, but the same is true of other models of ordained ministry. The liminal journey of stage 3-4 transition can accommodate a variety of "crook models" but the important issue is the development of theological reflection leading to praxis and ultimately better practice. All research is

valuable, and according to liminal theory, some tight theological constraints can be loosened.

- Experiences of grief and loss through the processes of change are predictable and every Catholic parish will experience this. Before ordination or commissioning, formation and training courses in this domain are essential for all those involved in pastoral ministry.

6.1.3 Further research questions[7]

In the light of the implications for practice and the consequent hypotheses that emerged from the data analysis, there are some significant research questions that the participants in the study identified as critical and which were relevant to their experience.

- What benefits can be derived from preparatory formation through internships and the exposure of married couples to the realities of new ministry roles? Cross-denominational links and research with other married couples in ministry should be pursued.
- What is the effectiveness of a small number of regular priests as visitors compared to one constant supervising priest?
- How effective is training for, and implementation of, an intentional pastoral strategy that deals with the issues of loss and grief?
- Renewed theological exploration of concepts such as *viri probati* or gender-inclusive variations that would suit Australia. How can the model apply to a team of lay ecclesial ministers, thus avoiding the repetition of the solo pastor model?
- Is there any evidence of the development of a realistic pattern of peer support for lay leaders and the genuine integration of such models within diocesan structures?
- A future study should address any priests who were part of the project. How appropriate was their early formation to ministry in partnership with full-time lay pastoral leaders?

6.2 *Can Aspendale still have a voice?*

Will all the themes and issues noted above be lost in the complex patterns of change? The Los Angeles document, *As I have Done For You,* was chosen as the last piece of data analysis in this report because it illustrates an open-ended way of exploring collaborative ministry that is similar to the cultural and theological genesis of the Aspendale project. Those in positions of ecclesiastical power can offer a steady diet of pronouncements or they can offer invitations to partnership in a rich theological dialogue that has ministry and mission as its goal. Critical and liberating dialogue that presupposes action is essential for adult communication.

> [T]o substitute monologue, slogans and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated (Freire 1970, 52).

Is it wrong in Melbourne to talk of oppressed and oppressor and the urgency of metaphorical burning buildings? Perhaps not for some who experience leadership within the Catholic Church (or any other tradition) as feudal and patriarchal. Maybe it is better to talk of a "conscientised people" who can be encouraged to examine their practice, "to reflect upon it and cast aside the culture of silence that has held their consciousness submerged" (Crotty 1998, 156). *Lumen Gentium* presents the local church as the fullness of the Church (no. 26). If leaders "substitute monologue, slogans and communiqués for dialogue," or neglect opportunities for theological reflection and dialogue in their relationship with the Church, their brothers and sisters, what is the cost? The cost may be the theft from that church of its very identity, character and status. Ironically this can happen when leaders try to protect the Church in much the same way as parents protect, and sometimes diminish the autonomy and identity of their children.

The fruits of encounters between tradition and local theology are another major loss if the culture prevents the "church [from] helping to expand the history of Christian

[7] All of these points argue that this model deserves another trial as an integrated part of a consultative

reflection that makes up the tradition" (Schreiter 1985, 34). The mutuality of systemic interrelationships, (the monkey-rope factor), will then assure losses rather than blessings on both sides and Sofield and Juliano's fourth phase may never emerge. For those working at a local level, the loss of trust due to the inability to sustain dialogue through the liminal experience of stage 3–4 transition, also threatens the loss of:

- a sense of ownership of the emerging mission;
- a sense of partnership in discovering new patterns of ministry;
- a sense of joy as collegial harmony and truth inspire faith and hope;
- a sense of competence and facility with the tools of theological reflection;
- a sense of identity in reshaping their own vocation and the vocation of others;
- a sense of an internal locus of control with all the possibilities of authoring a future.

It appears strange to close on a seemingly negative note when the final document from Los Angeles exemplified a culture of openness, mutuality and dialogue and the experience of the Aspendale community was, according to the data, so positive. However the negative outcomes at Aspendale during the time of the change in policy demonstrate the fine balance required of leadership during the liminal moments of transition. The reality of risk within this cameo of potential losses is reminiscent of the negative impact of totalising narratives. A forward-looking, dialogical hermeneutic such as that of the Los Angeles document or the *Tomorrow's Church* process, will attempt "to turn the book 'inside out' - drawing it out to face new questions and unexpected possibilities" (Veling 1996, 135). Sometimes the book is slammed shut. However, even when the dominant culture is antagonistic towards, or unsupportive of dialogue, it is possible for an exilic hermeneutic to permit 'the outside in' so that anything that would otherwise be unwritten, unspoken or invisible can appear on the pages of the text. There is a middle ground that describes the experience (for those with ecclesiastical power and those who have none) of being caught in the tension between dialogical and exilic hermeneutics. Walter Brueggemann describes the exilic voice as a grief that permits newness, a holiness that gives hope and a memory that allows possibility (1986, 132). This poetic trinity of grief, hope and memory finds an imaginative and courageous sequel in a marginal hermeneutic later characterised by Brueggemann as the ability to

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Tomorrow's Church-like process.

"picture, portray, receive, and practice the world in ways other than it appears to be" (1993, 13). Veling's hopeful definition of this voice from the margins is encouraging.

> Marginal hermeneutics is what happens when the twin events of belonging and non-belonging, faith and doubt, trust and suspicion, the written and the unwritten, presence and absence - when these 'unresolved two' burst into life in the thin interpretive edge that both joins and separates them (1996, 136).

Three small voices speak quietly from the margins to express a "thin interpretive edge". The *first word* came when the Aspendale model was deleted and the parish sent a letter on November 10 1997 explaining the decision not to participate in the new survey.

> *The purpose of this letter, written following consultation with the whole parish, is to express*
> - *our satisfaction with our current model of leadership,*
> - *our satisfaction with our current Parish Leader,*
> - *our disappointment that our model is no longer an option.*

The *second word* came in the Commissioning Liturgy for the Pastoral Leader at Aspendale on 11 February 1996.[8]

Archbishop: This new office in the Archdiocese entrusts the pastoral, spiritual, and organisational leadership of the parish to the Pastoral Leader under the supervision of a Priest-Pastoral Supervisor. Let us now pray for God's blessing in the fulfilment of his office. (Silent prayer).
Loving Father, in your love for us you sent your Son to be our shepherd and leader, our brother and Lord. You continue to show your love for us by means of a variety of ministries of leadership and pastoral care. Bless Terry Curtin as he takes up his responsibility as Pastoral Leader. Let your Spirit guide him as he walks with the people of this community. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. All: *Amen*

> I, Thomas Francis Little, Archbishop of Melbourne,
> commission you as Pastoral Leader of this parish community of
> St. Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, for a period of three years.
> May the Holy Spirit come upon you pouring out
> the gift of wisdom, when you are uncertain;
> the gift of courage when you are afraid;
> the gift of peace, when you are disturbed;
> the gift of joy, when you are blessed;
> the gift of compassion, when you meet suffering;
> and over all these gifts, to keep them together and complete them,
> may you put on love.
>
> All: Amen.

[8] This text is taken directly from the liturgy used on that day.

The *third word* came just over eight years later when it was noted in the minutes of the meeting of the Melbourne Senate of Priests on 13 December 2005 that the development

> of lay leadership [in Aspendale] certainly facilitated the ability of that parish to retain its identity and share a priest when amalgamation took place later on. The proper development of lay leadership should be seen as enabling future growth to happen rather than be considered a threat to the pastoral and ministerial role of the priest.[9]

Aspendale may have been a "crook model" but it provided an effective transitional ministry. The same minutes from the Melbourne Senate of Priests recall the *Tomorrow's Church* process, affirm the "exhaustive consultation" and comment on current concerns.

> The education of the laity for leadership and the support, and role clarification for priesthood were clearly identified as major issues of concern from 150 parishes. Since then the experience of change in structure and leadership has been perceived as one of imposition and not consultation as far as parishioners are concerned.
>
> Many people found the process of *Tomorrow's Church* very positive, only to become disappointed and angry when its conclusions were largely thrown out.

The "thin interpretive edge" is to be found in the liminal space of theological reflection whether those who hold the power sponsor it or not. It may well be true that the Church can survive without seminaries and theological colleges but the Church will not survive without theological reflection in relationship with other members of the community. Van Manen believes that the "refusal to live together is indifference," and when we fail to recognise the other person in open, relational and reflective dialogue then indifference "is a failure or crisis of the 'we'" (1990, 108). For Crotty, a 'conscientised people' are those

> who encounter one another in the common search to be more human ... They are people whose critical awareness melds reflection and action and enables them to transform their lives in a newfound spirit of hope and courage (1998, 156).[10]

[9] Minutes of Meeting. No. 261

[10] Freire states that dialogue requires an intense faith "to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in [our] vocation to be more truly human ... convinced that the power to create and transform, even when thwarted in concrete situations, tends to be reborn" (1970, 78).

The Los Angeles document provides a refreshing tone that serves as a fitting postscript for this study. A personal note from the Archbishop encouraged all priests, deacons, religious and baptised Catholics "to plan for studying the entire Pastoral Letter and for engaging in the exercises." This is a commitment to dialogue and theological reflection at all levels, but there is also the promise of a new dawn expressed in a pledge of support

> to priests, religious and laity as we move together to meet the needs of our local Church, working to reshape ministerial structures so that they allow for a more collaborative and inclusive exercise of ministry.[11]

The reader may then return to the opening paragraphs of the Los Angeles document to find that as the Archdiocese explores different models and perspectives of ministry

> there is a deepening awareness that even as we are faced with a shortage of priestly and religious vocations, we are being invited to a deeper understanding of the nature of the Christian vocation, and a fuller appreciation of ministry both ordained and non-ordained. There was and there remains a strong conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading us toward new horizons.[12]

It is to be hoped that the Aspendale voice will become some small part of that new horizon.

---

[11] *Pastoral Letter.* Conclusion.
[12] *Pastoral Letter.* Part 2. On the Road Together.

Appendix 1

Parish Questionnaire

St. Louis de Montfort Parish

Parishioners' Appraisal Form

Parish Leader: _____ Date: _____

Questionnaire based on *Enhancing Your Ministry: A Resource Kit for Priests* © Novalis 1996.

1. In the liturgy, the Pastoral Leader ...

Shows little preparation and reverence. He does not encourage participation.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Plans well; is reverent and sensitive to the involvement of people. The atmosphere is prayerful.
Gives short homilies, mainly about what he is doing. He seldom speaks about the readings or Church teaching.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Brings Scripture into the experiences of the people through his thoughtful homilies. Shares appropriately his own spiritual and relational experience.

Are there any comments you would like to make

.

2. In his pastoral ministry, the Pastoral Leader ...

Gives directives without really listening to people. He seems unapproachable.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Is sensitive and available to people as he listens attentively, guiding them to solve their problems and to grow spiritually.
Stresses the power of the hierarchical church. He makes all decisions by himself.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Encourages participation in parish life, and views the church as the people of God. All are encouraged to share in the priesthood of Christ.
Ignores opinions different from his; people are not enlightened or supported in exploring ideas.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Encourages people to discuss their differences and helps them to come to some resolution.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

3. In his evangelising ministry, the Pastoral Leader ...

Is rarely seen at any catechetical program in the parish; those are jobs for others.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Is actively involved in all religious and spiritual growth activities, either by periodically conducting sessions, or by frequently visiting the groups.
Does not spend any time training lay persons for ministry.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Ensures that all lay ministers, especially catechists, receive training and regular updating.
Does not encourage the RCIA in the parish.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Ensures that the RCIA is available to adults and to children. He speaks of it in the mass periodically.
Seldom speaks of vocations to ministry. There are no youth or renewal programs in the parish.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Involves youth in parish activities, encourages vocations.
He does not appear interested in local ecumenical activities. He fails to let the Parish know of these events.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Participates sensitively in ecumenical activities and supports local Inter-Church events.
There is little focus on outreach to those who are marginalised. This aspect of mission is a low priority.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Reaching the marginalised in the church and in society is frequently discussed, planned and implemented

Are there any comments you would like to make?

4. In his parish leadership, the Pastoral Leader...

Is not a good motivator. He does not solicit participation in the operation of the parish and does not encourage those who are involved.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Supports and encourages the creativity of parishioners. He is people-oriented and dedicated to growth of the parish as community.
Makes all decisions himself. He does not ask others for their opinions.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Collaborates closely with parish staff and ministers. He encourages discussion and draws on the abilities of parishioners.
Pays little attention to service done by staff, ministers and team leaders.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Monitors the service of staff and lay leaders to encourage their growth.
Never speaks of what the parish could be, other than part of the institutional church.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Has a sense of church as the people of God and a vision of the parish mission.

Are there any comments you would like to make?

5. In his administration, the Parish Leader ...

Does not advise the parish of how money is spent. The Pastoral Council only meets to hear what he has decided.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Involves the Pastoral and Finance committees in the total operation of the parish. He oversees budgets and recruits parish leaders.
Does not encourage any planning. The parish moves from crisis to crisis or just seems stagnant.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Works closely with parish councils, encouraging planning and evaluation of all parish programs.
Does not have good communication skills or effective ways of letting people know what is happening.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Lets parishioners know what it happening in the parish. He speaks well and openly.
Does not seem to follow up committee actions.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Energetically pursues council actions; things change in the parish as new ideas are adopted.

Are there any comments you would like to make?

6. In his personal and professional life, the Parish Leader ...

Does not seem to have a sense of accountability to the parish. His attitude is often negative.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Reflects joy and peace in his life. He relates well with people and listens to their advice. He has a sense of responsibility to the parish.
Is not well organised. He does not consult others before making a decision.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Demonstrates maturity and stability. He is dependable and seeks broad input before making decisions.
Does not seem to be very spiritual.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Is deeply committed to Christ, the church and the parish. He is reverent in what he does.
Does not take care of himself physically.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Maintains his physical fitness and personal appearance.
Does not attend workshops or other continuing education conferences.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Reads widely and attends courses and programs for continuing growth in his ministry.
Has few friends and does not develop social relationships.	1 2 3 4 5 6	Manages his time well; is prompt and prepared for liturgy and meetings.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Those willing to participate will be asked to allocate a maximum of one hour to a semi-structured interview or focus group and they will be free to decline to answer any question at any time.
This study will be conducted over the three–year period of the appointment of the Lay Pastoral Leader so there may be the need to conduct follow-up interviews with the permission of participants.
Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and they will not be asked for a reason.

Any questions concerning the procedures involved in this study titled,
"An evaluation of the dynamics of change as the Catholic Parish of St. Louis de Montfort, Aspendale, transitions from an Ordained Priest to a Lay Pastoral Leader", can be directed to:

1. The Principal Investigator,
   Alan Niven, of the School of Social Science (9790 1000). OR
2. Assoc. Prof. Marie Joyce, Head of the School of Social Science
   (9563 3600).

This study has been approved by the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee, and should there be any complaints by participants, they may contact:
The Chair
Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee
c/- Divisional Research Office
Mercy Campus
Mount Alexander Road,
Ascot Vale 3032
Any complaint made will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and the participant informed of the outcome.

.....

INFORMED CONSENT
I have read and understood the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
I agree to participate in this activity, realising I can withdraw at any time.
I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT .....
(block letters)

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

NAME OF INVESTIGATOR ..... *ALAN NIVEN* .....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

Appendix 3

Decree of Establishment

FRANCIS

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

METROPOLITAN

DECREE ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF PASTORAL LEADER IN THE PARISH OF ASPENDALE

In dioceses where there is a shortage of priests, the Code of Canon Law permits the diocesan bishop to appoint a person who is not a priest to be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish (Canon 517§2).

In view of the increasing shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, I hereby establish in the Parish of St Louis de Montfort, Aspendale in this Archdiocese of Melbourne the office of Pastoral Leader. This office is an ecclesiastical office as described in Canon 145.

The Pastoral Leader will be a lay person entrusted with the general operation of the parish in the absence of a resident parish priest. Under the supervision of a Priest Pastoral Supervisor, the Pastoral Leader will provide pastoral, spiritual and organisational leadership for the parish.

This office will be in existence for a period of three years. During the last six months of this period, there will be a review to determine whether this office will continue for a further period of time, or will be suppressed.

The rights and duties proper to this office are defined as follows:

Ministry of Overall Leadership

1. To work in partnership with the Parish Pastoral Council and under the guidance of the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor in developing a vision for the life and mission of the parish in the light of the gospel.

2. To discern parish needs and plans for the future in collaboration with the parish pastoral council to ensure effective parish programs related to real needs.

3. To serve as animator and leader of the parish community, offering encouragement to parish groups and individuals as they live out the parish mission.

4. To ensure that there is ongoing evaluation of parish life, programs, and staff functioning in the context of the mission.

5. In consultation with the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor, to employ parish staff members to assist in fulfilling the duties and specific responsibilities of the Pastoral Leader position, with the specific exception that the Pastoral Leader must not employ any person to work in, or in connection with, the parish school.

6. To oversee the recruitment, training, and ongoing development of parishioners for parish ministry.

7. To represent the parish community at civil, ecumenical, Deanery and Diocesan gatherings.

8. To serve as liaison between the parish and the Archdiocese, its offices, commissions, and groups, attending meetings called for parish leaders, providing the archdiocese with the information and reports requested, abiding by its policies and implementing its programs, and keeping parishioners informed regarding the larger Church beyond the parish boundaries.

9. To administer the material assets of the parish, overseeing buildings, finances, fund-raising, and budget preparation in accordance with the Statutes for Parish Finance Committees of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and the Diocesan Building Procedures Manual of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

10. To preside as a delegate of the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor whenever the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor is absent from a meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council or the Parish Finance Committee. (This derogates Statute 3.3 of the Statutes for Parish Finance Committees of the Archdiocese of Melbourne).

11. To be a pastoral presence to students and staff at the parish school, to be a member of the Parish Education Board, to participate in school liturgies, and in partnership with the Principal, to work to develop the life of the school community.

12. To report to the Priest-Pastoral Supervisor at least monthly on all facets of the life of the Parish.

Ministry of Worship

1. To co-ordinate the sacramental life of the parish in collaboration with the Sacramental Minister.

2. To ensure that liturgical ministers are recruited, trained and supported.

3. To express his/her role as leader by a visible presence at Sunday Eucharists, for example, at penitential rite, Communion, parish notices, greeting people before and/or afterwards.

4. To share in the planning and evaluation of Sunday liturgy/homilies, children's and other special group or home liturgies, and seasonal liturgies.

5. To preach when pastorally appropriate and canonically permissible, noting that the homily at Mass is always reserved to a priest or deacon.

6. To participate in planning and co-ordination of the Rite of Anointing during Mass.

7. To work with couples planning weddings.

8. To provide guidance for families arranging funerals.

9. On occasions when a funeral without a Requiem Mass is requested, to preside at that and celebrate a Liturgy of the Word and Final Commendation according to the Rite of Funerals.

10. In the absence of the Sacramental Minister, to lead weekday liturgy (Morning Prayer and Communion Service, or Liturgy of the Word and Communion Service).

Ministry of Proclamation

1. To facilitate development of a spiritual and educational vision for religious education activities in the parish.

2. To ensure that the sacramental catechesis programs are appropriately co-ordinated: pre-baptismal instruction of parents, first penance, first Communion, confirmation preparation, marriage preparation.

3. To ensure that a ministry of evangelisation and outreach is taking place in the parish.

4. To see to the provision of an adult education ministry to meet the needs of the parish.

5. To share in planning and co-ordination of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Ministry of Service

1. To be a strong pastoral presence throughout the parish, available to all and particularly to those experiencing key life events.

2. To ensure that ministry of care and social ministries are functioning within the parish.

3. To provide spiritual and pastoral support to individuals and families.

4. To provide spiritual support for staff, committees and other groups in the parish.

5. To respond to the needs in the neighbourhood community in collaboration with volunteer ministers.

6. To develop social consciousness among the staff and parishioners.

Pilot Project Phase

1. To liaise with the Pastoral Leadership Board of the Archdiocese of Melbourne in monitoring and regular review of parish model implementation.

2. To assist in the collection of research data.

3. To provide the pilot project researcher with access to parish documents, ministry groups and personnel.

I have established this office in the Parish of Aspendale after wide consultation, notably with the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning and the Pastoral Leadership Board of the Archdiocese.

This decree takes effect immediately. I order that a true copy of it be displayed on the noticeboard of St Louis de Montfort's Parish Church for one calendar month.

I invoke the blessings of God on the parishioners of Aspendale parish. May the establishment of this office of Pastoral Leader be the occasion for the parishioners to renew their commitment to the Lord and the service of His Church.

Given at St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne, on the first day of February, in the year of Our Lord, 1996.

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

NOTARY

Appendix 4

Selected Samples of Coding - Interviews

(Pastoral Leader)

Category 1 Loyalty and leadership that engages, challenges, and supports the structures.

PHASE TWO Follows thematic editing.

I'm an **ecclesiastical officer,** **under canon law, respondent to** the Archbishop. **I am aware of my contract so I stick to my contract** My first **obligation** is to **ensure that the principle and regime** that the **existing** parish operates ... is **maintained.** It's **absolutely a Catholic parish** and all the **loyalties** that a Catholic parish has to the **Pope** are **absolutely**, as far as I am concerned, **are not questioned.** **I certainly wouldn't** come at it from the point of view of **congregationalism versus hierarchy** **versus institution.**	ecclesiastical officer, under canon law, respondent to stick to my contract obligation, ensure ... principle ... regime, existing, maintained, absolutely a Catholic parish, loyalties, ... to the Pope, absolutely, are not questioned, I certainly wouldn't, congregationalism versus hierarchy versus institution
Dialogical Question emerging through the year. The issues you spoke about in regard to the **future of Catholicism** seemed to be **heartfelt** and **very personal.** I got the sense that there was **something happening out there** **rather than something that you would be committed** to **actually bringing about,** for example **the kind of** **change** that **might happen.** **(** PIVOTAL DILEMMA) ..... > identity and** **conscience.**	Dialogical Question future of Catholicism, heartfelt and very personal, something happening out there, not something committed to actually bringing it about, that kind of change, it might happen
Yes. Sure! You are absolutely right. I would **hate to do** **anything** in the parish that **might undermine** **Catholicism as it exists** at the moment. I feel **strongly contractually obliged** to it. **For Aspendale right now to be Catholic is very, very** **important.** You are quire right. **I am looking down the** **future in a sort of way that is a luxury** in a sense, but **little to do with what is happening at Aspendale.** **(** PIVOTAL TENSION) ..... role identity** **Only the priest may give the homily.** **In actual fact** I'd **preach often enough** - maybe monthly at Sunday Mass. - the **priest gives a 30 second homily** and I give a reflection **just for the sake** of **observing Canon Law** in the area.	hate to do anything in parish might undermine Catholicism as it exists strongly contractually obliged, to be catholic is very, very important, looking down the future, a luxury, little to do with ... Aspendale only priest may give the homily fact, I'd preach often enough priest gives a 30 second homily just for the sake, observing canon law

PHASE THREE Follows member checking and precedes interpretation

DATA	RELATES TO STRUCTURE	WRESTLING WITH IDENTITY	EXPERIENCES OF MINISTRY TENSION
ecclesiastical officer, under canon law, respondent to Arch	ecclesiastical officer/canon law resp. to Arch	obedient servant	personal loyalty
stick to my contract/obligation, ensure ... principle ... regime, existing ... maintained,	stick to contract principle regime existing maintained		responsibility
absolutely a Catholic parish, loyalties, ... to the Pope,	Catholic parish loyalties to Pope	Catholic servant loyal /unquestioning servant	
absolutely, are not questioned, I certainly wouldn't,	not questioned I wouldn't		status quo
congregationalism versus hierarchy versus institution	congregation hierarchy institution	corporate servant	local v. institutional
***	***	***	***
Dialogical Question			*Dialogical Question*
The issues you spoke about in regard to the future of Catholicism seemed to be	*future of Catholicism*		
heartfelt and very personal. I got the sense that there was	*heartfelt/personal*		*hope*
something happening out there rather than something that you would be committed to			Role?
actually bringing about, for example the kind of change that might happen.	kind of change		responsibility
***	***	***	***
hate to do anything in parish, might undermine	parish Catholicism	responsible servant	PL identity Pastoral
Catholicism as it exists strongly/contractually obliged,	contract Catholic	obedient servant Catholic servant	identity Catholic
to be Catholic very, very important,			identity
looking down the future, a luxury,		visionary leader	leadership
little to do with what is happening,		pragmatic leader	
only the priest gives 30 sec homily in actual fact, just for	Priest homily just for the sake canon	teacher-priest	ambiguity
the sake observing canon law	law	pragmatic servant	

Category 2 The ability to analyse and critique

PHASE 3

DATA OR SCRIPT 18 months, Interviews/discussions	PLAYERS Dominant characters	PLACE Phase 3–4 'liminality'	PLOT Issues and values
things are changing, Aspendale	present Church	transition	semper ref.
undercurrent	present Church	alienation	dialogue
different trends,	present Church	transition	semper ref.
questioning Catholicism	present Church	de-status	dialogue
theology/ministry degrees	present Church	equality	vocation
Fowlers' stages of faith	disciple	transition	vocation
following of Jesus mean?	disciple	transition	vocation
necessarily linked to Catholicism?	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
monolithic hierarchical structure,	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
new form of church	future Church	transition	semper ref.
less monolithic / less hierarchical	Catholicism	state	dialogue
large structures	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
ordained celibate male ministry	Catholicism	state	vocation
priesthood breaking down	priest/lay leader	de-status	semper ref.
new pattern of ministry emerge	priest/lay leader	transition	semper ref.
different models of leadership	priest/lay leader	transition	semper ref.
that move away from	future Church	transition	dialogue
monolithic structure	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
not be all and end all for ever	future Church	de-status	dialogue
following of Jesus	disciple	transition	vocation
church has to change	future Church	de-status	semper ref.
recognisable 100 years	future Church	transition	semper ref.
local level getting stronger	present Church	communitas	dialogue
Rome vetoed what accepted by most	Catholicism	inequality	dialogue
harm to its authority	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
revealed doctrine infallibly true	Catholicism	inequality	dialogue
women may not be ordained	Catholicism	inequality	dialogue
did themselves incredible harm	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
people say nonsense	disciple	de-status	dialogue
Scripture no evidence	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
Rome not helping itself	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
Bishops pick it up (some quieter)	Catholicism	state	dialogue
central authority undermined	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
fall back on own community	present Church	communitas	dialogue
personal relationship with Jesus	disciple	communitas	vocation
presence of Christ in community	present Church	communitas	vocation
back in a congregational direction	present Church	communitas	dialogue
unless tradition held in place	present Church	transition	dialogue
certain authorities dissipation	Catholicism	transition	dialogue
communities go in own directions	Catholicism	transition	dialogue
value tradition Bishop still important	present Church	transition	dialogue
danger in congregationalism	present Church	transition	semper ref.

maintain the tradition in balance	present Church	transition	dialogue
(not) congregationalism	Catholicism	de-status	dialogue
versus hierarchy versus institution	Catholicism	de-status	semper ref.
people life situation	disciple	transition	vocation
revelation Scripture tradition	disciple	transition	vocation
personal relationship with Jesus	disciple	transition	vocation
mean for community?	present Church	transition	dialogue
where that takes us just don't know	disciple	transition	dialogue
experience suggests	priest/lay leader	transition	dialogue
more interest priests to come say mass	present Church	transition	dialogue
what will happen?	present Church	transition	dialogue
part of another parish?	present Church	transition	dialogue
immediate and local issues	present Church	transition	dialogue
hate to do anything undermine	priest/lay leader	state	semper ref.
Catholicism as it exists	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
strongly contractually obliged	Catholicism	state	vocation
to be Catholic is very important	Catholicism	state	dialogue
looking down the future a luxury	present Church	transition	dialogue
John's gospel Jesus What do you want?	disciple	transition	vocation
Where do you live? Come and see?	disciple	transition	vocation
respond to pastoral presence	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
more than grand ideas	Catholicism	de-status	vocation
pastor leadership, liturgy, ideals	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
unless pastoral presence	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
response doesn't follow	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
I don't lead major liturgies	priest/lay leader	state	semper ref.
Eucharist, baptism don't lead either	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
baptism, if archbishop says	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
eucharist substantial impediment	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
close relationship pastoral/liturgical	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
eucharist ... community gathers	present Church	communitas	vocation
who presides leader of community	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
gathering main liturgical	present Church	communitas	vocation
memorial Lord's Supper	present Church	state	vocation
breaking the word	priest/lay leader	state	vocation
particular purpose Catholic regime	Catholicism	state	dialogue
presider homily strong, impt. connection	priest/lay leader	presence	vocation
only priest gives homily	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
I'd preach monthly	priest/lay leader	transition	semper ref.
Priest, 30 sec. homily I give reflection	priest/lay leader	transition	semper ref.
observing canon law	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
somebody from outside not the leader	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
isn't able to articulate concerns	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
of the community	priest/lay leader	communitas	dialogue
can't relate issues/problems	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
difficulty applying the word	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
to the living situation	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
outsider, homily, handicapped	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
main opportunity -word to community			

eucharist word homily connected	priest/lay leader	communitas	dialogue
	present Church	alienation	vocation
difficult to be PL if (not) euch. leader	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
aren't also liturgical leader homilist	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
only ordained person	future Church	de-status	dialogue
should ordain more people	future Church	transition	semper ref.
not restrict to a celibate male	future Church	transition	semper ref.
priest say mass ... not lay leader	priest/lay leader	alienation	semper ref.
most people terrific	present Church	communitas	dialogue
different priests different approach	present Church	transition	dialogue
all give good sermon	present Church	transition	vocation
my difficulty - not liturgical leader	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
but pastoral leadership	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
comes from me	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
Question: your personal cross?			
really good way to put it	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
bitching needs to be private	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
saying ... crook model of church	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
I know about theology of ministry	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
stinks to separate	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
community leader/liturgical leader	priest/lay leader	alienation	vocation
history Catholic Church	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
leadership out of community	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation.
early Church put leader forward	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
"Look! Ordain him"	priest/lay leader	communitas	vocation
switch around/reversed sociology	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
selected priests put in charge	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
priest then was accepted	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
leader became leader	present Church	state	vocation
pastoral liturgical sacramental	present Church	state	vocation
pastoral and spiritual leadership	present Church	state	vocation
divorce from liturgical/crook idea	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
my experience reinforced	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
conviction stronger and personal	priest/lay leader	alienation	dialogue
not wanted, an embarrassment	Catholicism	alienation	dialogue
happy if experiment didn't work	Catholicism	state	dialogue
boost priesthood, image lifted	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
morale is lifted	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
high theology of priesthood	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
alter christus	Catholicism	state	semper ref.
or priesthood of people of God	present Church	communitas	vocation
owned by the whole people	present Church	communitas	vocation
priest representative of community	present Church	communitas	vocation
that possesses priesthood	present Church	communitas	vocation
emphasise priesthood of all	present Church	communitas	vocation
status of priest not quite as high	Catholicism	de-status	vocation
high status more attractive	Catholicism	state	vocation

Samples of Coding – Questionnaires and Interviews

(Parishioners)

Question 1. In the liturgy the Pastoral Leader:

Phase Two

Discerning overlapping roles. Ministry in two directions.

MUTUALITY AND PRIESTS "Detailed sentences" (van Manen 1990, 93)	MUTUALTY AND COMMUNITY "Detailed sentences" (van Manen 1990, 93)
• **complements** our **visiting Priests** from who we receive **another perspective** of **community** and our **relationship with God**. (T to P and P to C) • While not intruding he has **cemented us together**. It doesn't seem to matter who the Priest is as **their hearts have been supportive** of us too. In this way PL and the Priests **complement and add to our eucharistic celebration**. (When able to give homilies). (T to P. P to C. TP to C) **Good summary quote** • We feel PL is **our leader** and **represents the Parish** as he welcomes the visiting Priest. Although we see some Priests more often than others there is no problem with them. PL is the "**constant**". (T to P) • PL is the **real leader** ... and makes the liturgy happen no matter who the Priest is. (T to P) • PL has been **publicly affirmed** on a number of occasions **by visiting priests** and obviously he and they share **friendship and mutual respect**. This has helped him **grow in confidence**. (P to T) • While the Priest may preside over the table – PL is **openly our parish Spiritual Leader**. (T to P) • PL shows the **respect** due to our visiting priests while **maintaining his own position**. (T to P) • He has **never** set himself as the **equivalent** of a priest. He shows **deference** to visiting priests; always welcomes them as the "**minister who will lead us in liturgy**." (T to P) • The liturgy) This seems to fit well and flow. PL's **personality is conducive** to	• PL is able to include many of his **personal experiences** in and around the Parish • become **one body** • While **not intruding he has cemented** us together. • We feel PL **is our leader and represents** the Parish ... PL is the "**constant**". • PL is the **real leader** ... and **makes the liturgy happen** no matter who the Priest is. • (Affirmation by priests) This has helped him **grow in confidence.** • PL shows the **respect** due to our visiting priests while **maintaining his own position.** • (The liturgy) This seems to fit well and flow. PL's **personality is conducive** to this. • Mass at St Louis' Church has a wonderfully **spiritual quality** ... To me this is the sign of the success of this model of parish leadership. • PL **complements our visiting Priests** by being the **constant focus** in our parish. It is him we **relate to on a day to day** basis. • Perfectly **complements** the ministry of visiting priests. A **great and comforting presence** - establishes a **spirit of belonging** to our faith. CRITIQUE • I feel the Pastoral Leader role should either be given the choice of being ordained and so choose this if he sees it

this. (T to P) • Mass at St Louis' Church has a **wonderfully spiritual quality** ... To me this is the sign of the success of this model of parish leadership. (T to P to C) • as Father M. said at mass today - **PL's role helps priests do what they do best** and PL has been very **approachable** in his position. (P to T) • PL **complements** our visiting Priests by being the **constant focus** in our parish. It is him we relate to on a **day to day** basis. (T to P) • **Participates well with the many priests.** (T to P) • It is a great delight to have had such a **variety of priests** over the last two years. This for me has been one of the highlights of this model. (TP to C) • Once a month he **takes some pressure off** the priests by giving excellent **homilies** at all the three masses of the weekend. (T to P; P to C) • **Perfectly complements** the ministry of visiting priests. A **great and comforting presence** - establishes a **spirit of belonging** to our faith. (T to P; TP to C)	as his or her calling and so takes on a full role as an assistant to the parish priest (or as a layperson paid accordingly). • I personally would prefer the priest and not PL to give the preachings. • I would like to see would be more weekday masses if possible. • This is the best that could be in the circumstances. I long for the day though when our Leader will lead our eucharist. I think our model doesn't make sense.

Supplementary data from conversations	POLICY	DISCERNMENT
6.13 I think I can sum up by saying we **fully approve of PL**. I think it **shows that married men can be priests. How can the hierarchy ignore** what is obviously **God's will?**	shows that married men can be priests How can hierarchy ignore .... God's will?	Fully approve of PL
6.19 I feel PL has been the **best thing** to happen to this parish. We have **gained <u>so</u> much** and **lost very little** through not having a priest. However I feel very strongly that we have been **let down by the diocese** in not having our own **regular sacramental priests** (as the model was meant to). We have had a wonderful and varied	let down by diocese regular sacramental priests	best thing to happen gained much/ lost little

group of priests but I think it would be better to have **1-3 regulars** who would **get to know us** as a parish.	1-3 regulars get to know us	
6.23. I have lived in this parish for over 30 years. In all ways, in my opinion, PL has made a **tremendous difference** in all areas. He is **knowledgeable, tolerant, compassionate ad a very good communicator**. We are so lucky to have him as our PL		made a tremendous difference knowledgeable, tolerant, compassionate, very good communicator
6. 25, He has done a **superb job.**		superb job
Sadly he is **not a priest, cannot celebrate Mass** and, although I am sure he would hear the sins of many people, he **cannot absolve sins**. He is a **good example of a layman who could be ordained** – if he wanted it and the Church accepted him. But that's for the **Church to decide**,	not a priest, cannot celebrate Mass he would hear the sins of many people, he cannot absolve sins. good example of a layman who could be ordained Church decide	
6. 42. The pastoral leader has recently been in hospital, however priests in other parishes have no doubt been ill also; therefore this factor should not weigh in the balance against him. On the contrary, with a **rapidly ageing clergy**, it suggests that **more pastoral leaders** may be required to **ease the burdens** of those workers who are already bearing the brunt of the work.	rapidly ageing clergy more PL's to ease burden	
6. 44. Archbishop George Pell should take the PL's **position as a role model** for the rest of Victoria, Australia and eventually the world.	as a role model	
6. 52. PL is always available and works extremely hard for this parish – if married priests were allowed he would be an ideal candidate.	if married priests allowed he would be an ideal candidate.	always available works hard
6.14. Perhaps PL **works too hard both physically and mentally** resulting in his 'heart condition' some little while ago. We were all overjoyed to see him back with us and I felt quite 'headless' without him.		all overjoyed to see him back ... I felt quite 'headless' without him.

Appendix 5

Ethics Clearance

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Office of Research

Research Projects Ethics Committee

Ethics Clearance for a Research Project - Approval Form

Ethics clearance has been granted for the following project:

Research Ethics Committee Register Number: *M96-040*

Project title: *An evalution of the dynamics of change as the Catholic parish of St Louis de Montfort, Aspendale: transitions from an ordained priest to a lay pastoral leader.*

Supervising Investigator(s): Assoc Prof Marie Joyce, Christ Campus

Student Investigator(s) Mr Alan Niven, Christ Campus

for the period: *present to May 1999*

subject to the following conditions as stipulated in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Statement on Human Experimentation and Supplementary Notes 1992:

(i) *that principal investigators provide reports annually on the form supplied by the Institutional Research Project Ethics Committee, on matters including:*
- *security of records;*
- *compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation;*
- *compliance with special conditions, and*

(ii) *as a condition of approval of the research protocol, require that investigators report immediately anything which might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol, including:*
- *adverse effects on participants;*
- *proposed changes in the protocol, and/or*
- *unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.*

and subject to the following conditions as stipulated by the Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee:

- In the letter to the participants, delete "the" from "the Australian Catholic University"
- In the letter to the participants, the correct address for complaints by participants is:-

The Chair
Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee
C/- Office of Research
Mercy Campus
412 Mt Alexander Road
ASCOT VALE VIC 3032

- An Annual Progress Report Form will need to be completed and submitted to the Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee within one month of the 1st September 1997. A reminder and the appropriate form will be sent to you at the appropriate time. Please arrange for the Student Investigator to sign and date the form and return it to the Office of Research after you have also signed it:

Executive Officer
Melbourne Inter-Faculty Research Projects Ethics Committee
C/- Office of Research
Mercy Campus
412 Mt Alexander Road
ASCOT VALE VIC 3032

Signed: Stewart J Harlow Date: 23/9/96
(RPEC Executive Officer)

****

(Do NOT cut or separate.)

(NOTE: To be completed by the Chief (and Co-)Investigator(s) or Student and Supervisor, as appropriate, and returned to the Office of Research as soon as possible.)
The date when I/we expect to commence contact with human participants or access their records is:

.....

I/We hereby declare that I/We am/are aware of the conditions governing research involving human participants as set out in the Research Projects Ethics Committee's *Guidelines and Instructions for Researchers/Students* and agree to the conditions stated above.

Signed: Maria R. Fiore Date: 24/9/96
(Chief Investigator or Supervisor, as appropriate)

Signed: Alan Nunn Date: 24/9/96
(Co-investigator(s) or Student Investigator, as appropriate)

(Our ref: ethapp1.wpd) OR/E30/968

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1994 Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests

1994 Address on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry – Pope John Paul II

1995 Catechism of the Catholic Church

1995 Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium – U.S. Catholic Bishops

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